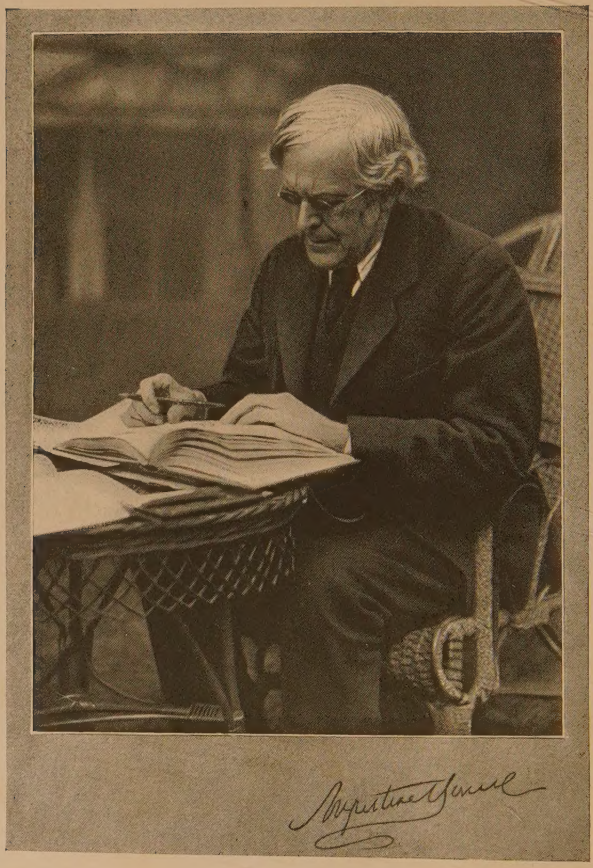
3 vols

THE COLLECTED ESSAYS & ADDRESSES
OF THE
RT. HON. AUGUSTINE BIRRELL



THE COLLECTED
ESSAYS & ADDRESSES
OF THE RT. HON.
AUGUSTINE BIRRELL
1880-1920

VOL. ONE

MCMXXII
LONDON & TORONTO
J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.

All rights reserved

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

PREFACE

I OWN to having been not a little surprised when my old friend Mr. Dent (whose first publication, *The Essays of Elia*, I edited many years ago) expressed a desire to produce a collected edition of my essays—"if my poor ramblings amount to that appellation."

I had lately brought myself to believe that my race as an essayist was run, and remembering that it had begun more than thirty-eight years ago, my vanity was not in the least wounded by that sombre reflection.

During this prolonged period I have enjoyed (for an essayist of my calibre) a considerable circulation, both at home and in the United States, where from the first Messrs. Scribners had done their honest best for me even in the old unprotected days; and as a book-hunter from boyhood I knew that in due time the purchased volumes would find their way to the stall and the "second-hand" catalogue, and so be bandied about from one owner to another for an indefinite period of time.

And yet for all that, Mr. Dent's unlooked-for

proposal gave me pleasure, for circulation is an author's life, and the more volumes there are in the world with his name upon their title-pages the better is his chance of living, for the more frequent will be the appearance and reappearance of his books on the stall and in the catalogue.

I became an author quite by accident. I had never dreamt of such a thing. Some time in 1883, whilst pursuing in Lincoln's Inn, after a dimmish but not wholly unremunerative fashion, the now decayed profession of an equity draftsman and conveyancer, it occurred to me that it would be a cheap amusement could I persuade two old schoolfellows who had, I knew, like myself, some manuscripts which had been read aloud in friendly coteries, to club together and print for private circulation one hundred copies of our selected lucubrations. I failed to excite their interest in this enterprise save so far that George Radford, afterwards Sir George Radford, a London County Councillor and a Member of Parliament and from very early days a dear friend of my own, produced a paper entitled "Falstaff" and handed it over to me, telling me that I might do what I listed with it. With this notable exception I was thrown upon my own resources.

When the little packet was made up, I sent it

to Mr. Elliot Stock and asked for an estimate of the cost of printing one hundred copies. His reply took the form of sending me *two* estimates, one for a hundred copies, the other for two hundred and fifty, and at the same time he pointed out to me that as the difference in cost was insignificant I might as well "have a little fun for my money" and let him print the larger number—and send twenty-five to the newspapers.

As the book was to be anonymous I had no need to think about my clients, and so it came about that at the beginning of the long vacation of 1884 the first series of *Obiter Dicta* made its appearance.

Then the unexpected happened. In 1884 I had never "reviewed" a book, or indeed written a line in either the daily or the weekly press, and I could not, therefore, have known that *Obiter Dicta* was a book very easy to review, touching as it did, lightly enough, on a variety of familiar topics, and composed in a style not yet grown jaded.

However that may be, "reviewed" *Obiter Dicta* was, *and at once*, in nearly all the papers and with a prodigality of praise. The *Times* was more than friendly, the *Spectator* bestowed upon it at least two "serious" notices, the *St. James's Gazette* had something to say about the paper on "Actors,"

and so had the *World*. The "Falstaff" excited genuine admiration. Headmasters of public schools quoted *Obiter Dicta* in their sermons in the school chapel, and, as Jowett's Life subsequently revealed, it was read with pleasure in the master's lodge at Balliol, and attributed to a single lady living at Clifton!

I was (to tell the truth) greatly taken aback by this small triumph, but nevertheless the reviews sealed my fate as an author, for from that day forward I have pursued, as an avocation, the pleasant path of periodical publication.

There must, however, be an end of such things, and I am glad to be able to part company with these essays, and to dismiss them finally; not indeed with "frigid indifference," for that would be too lofty a frame of mind for me ever to assume, but with this prefatory puff, gentle as is the breath with which a child disperses a dandelion-clock.

I have reprinted the essays (blunders excepted) exactly as they were first published, but have rearranged them in the hope of being able to impart to them at least an air of consecutiveness. I have, however, taken pains to add to each essay the year in which it first appeared; for dates are both explanatory and excusatory things. My

essays need little explanation, but occasionally they may require excuse.

I should perhaps make a formal excuse for including in a collected edition of my essays George Radford's "Falstaff," but I cannot bring myself to part company with it. Many of my oldest friends have often told me that they like it better than the others, and whether I have agreed with them or not I have always found it pleasanter to read than any of my own. Lady Radford has given me her permission so to include it.

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL.

The Pightle, Sheringham,
October 1922.

Note.—The few papers to which an asterisk is attached have never before been collected. The Rectorial Address was published at the time by Mr. Humphreys of "Hatchards'," and the Address on John Bright by Mr. Fisher Unwin.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
John Milton	1
Roger North's Autobiography	35
Pope	42
Lord Bolingbroke	80
Dean Swift	86
* "Gulliver's Travels"	94
John Gay	100
Sir John Vanbrugh	107
Dr. Johnson	113
The Gospel according to Dr. Johnson	139
The Johnsonian Legend	143
Boswell as Biographer	150
Edmund Burke	155
Sterne	184
Lord Chesterfield	189
Samuel Richardson	196
Edward Gibbon	221
William Cowper	251
Richard Cumberland	272
Hannah More	278
Arthur Young	284
Thomas Paine	292

PAGE

John Wesley 301
Sir Robert Peel 326
*The Private Letters of Sir Robert Peel . 349
*John Bright 355
*Cobden 373
Disraeli "ex relatione" Sir William Fraser . 382
*Gladstone 389

JOHN MILTON

1887

IT is now more than sixty years ago since Mr. Carlyle took occasion to observe, in his *Life of Schiller*, that, except the *Newgate Calendar*, there was no more sickening reading than the biographies of authors.

Allowing for the vivacity of the comparison, and only remarking, with reference to the *Newgate Calendar*, that its compilers have usually been very inferior wits, in fact attorneys, it must be owned that great creative and inventive genius, the most brilliant gifts of bright fancy and happy expression, and a glorious imagination, well-nigh seeming as if it must be inspired, have too often been found most unsuitably lodged in ill-living and scandalous mortals. Though few things, even in what is called Literature, are more disgusting than to hear small critics, who earn their bite and sup by acting as the self-appointed showmen of the works of their betters, heaping terms of moral opprobrium upon those whose genius is, if not exactly a lamp unto our feet, at all events a joy to our hearts,—still, not even genius can repeal the Decalogue, or re-write the sentence of doom, "He which is filthy, let him be filthy still." It is therefore permissible to wish that some of our great authors had been better men.

It is possible to dislike John Milton. Men have been found able to do so, and women too; amongst these latter his daughters, or one of them at least, must even be included. But there is nothing sickening about his biography, for it is the life of one who early consecrated himself to the service of the highest Muses, who took labour and intent study as his portion, who aspired himself to be a noble poem, who, Republican though he became, is what Carlyle called him, the moral king of English literature.

Milton was born in Bread Street, Cheapside, on the 9th of December, 1608. This is most satisfactory, though indeed what might have been expected. There is a notable disposition nowadays, amongst the meaner-minded provincials, to carp and gird at the claims of London to be considered the mother-city of the Anglo-Saxon race, to regret her pre-eminence, and sneer at her fame. In the matters of municipal government, gas, water, fog, and snow, much can be alleged and proved against the English capital, but in the domain of poetry, which I take to be a nation's best guaranteed stock, it may safely be said that there are but two shrines in England whither it is necessary for the literary pilgrim to carry his cockle hat and shoon —London, the birthplace of Chaucer, Spenser, Ben Jonson, Milton, Herrick, Pope, Gray, Blake, Keats, and Browning, and Stratford-upon-Avon, the birthplace of Shakespeare. Of English poets it may be said generally they are either born in London or remote country places. The large provincial towns know them not. Indeed, nothing is more pathetic than the way in which these dim, destitute places

hug the memory of any puny whipster of a poet who may have been born within their statutory boundaries. This has its advantages, for it keeps alive in certain localities fames that would otherwise have utterly perished. Parnassus has forgotten all about Henry Kirke White, but the lace manufacturers of Nottingham still name him with whatever degree of reverence they may respectively consider to be the due of letters. Manchester is yet mindful of Dr. John Byrom. Liverpool clings to Roscoe, and faintly remembers Mrs. Hemans.

Milton remained faithful to his birth-city, though, like many another Londoner, when he was persecuted in one house he fled into another. From Bread Street he moved to St. Bride's Churchyard, Fleet Street; from Fleet Street to Aldersgate Street; from Aldersgate Street to the Barbican; from the Barbican to the south side of Holborn; from the south side of Holborn to what is now called York Street, Westminster; from York Street, Westminster, to the north side of Holborn; from the north side of Holborn to Jewin Street; from Jewin Street to his last abode in Bunhill Fields. These are not vain repetitions if they serve to remind a single reader how all the enchantments of association lie about him. Englishwomen have been found searching about Florence for the street where George Eliot represents Romola as having lived, who have admitted never having been to Jewin Street, where the author of *Lycidas* and *Paradise Lost* did in fact live.

Milton's father was the right kind of father, amiable, accomplished, and well-to-do. He was by business what was then called a scrivener, a term

which has received judicial interpretation, and imported a person who arranged loans on mortgage, receiving a commission for so doing. The poet's mother, whose baptismal name was Sarah (his father was, like himself, John), was a lady of good extraction, and approved excellence and virtue. We do not know very much about her, for the poet was one of those rare men of genius who are prepared to do justice to their fathers. Though Sarah Milton did not die till 1637, she only knew her son as the author of *Comus*, though it is surely a duty to believe that no son would have poems like *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* in his desk, and not at least once produce them and read them aloud to his mother. These poems, though not published till 1645, were certainly composed in his mother's life. She died before the troubles began, the strife and contention in which her well-graced son, the poet, the dreamer of all things beautiful and cultured, the author of the glancing, tripping measure—

> Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
> Jest and youthful jollity—

was destined to take a part, so eager and so fierce, and for which he was to sacrifice twenty years of a poet's life.

The poet was sent to St. Paul's School, where he had excellent teaching of a humane and expanding character, and he early became, what he remained until his sight left him, a strenuous reader and a late student.

> Or let my lamp at midnight hour
> Be seen on some high, lonely tower,
> Where I may oft outwatch the Bear.

Whether the maid who was told off by the elder

Milton to sit up till twelve or one o'clock in the morning for this wonderful Pauline realised that she was a kind of doorkeeper in the house of genius, and blessed accordingly, is not known, and may be doubted. When sixteen years old Milton proceeded to Christ's College, Cambridge, where his memory is still cherished; and a mulberry tree, supposed in some way to be his, rather unkindly kept alive. Milton was not a submissive pupil; in fact, he was never a submissive anything, for there is point in Dr. Johnson's malicious remark, that man in Milton's opinion was born to be a rebel, and woman a slave.

But in most cases, at all events, the rebel did well to be rebellious, and perhaps he was never so entirely in the right as when he protested against the slavish traditions of Cambridge educational methods in 1625.

Universities must, however, at all times prove disappointing places to the young and ingenuous soul, who goes up to them eager for literature, seeing in every don a devotee to intellectual beauty, and hoping that lectures will, by some occult process—the *genius loci*—initiate him into the mysteries of taste and the storehouses of culture. And then the improving conversation, the flashing wit, the friction of mind with mind,—these are looked for, but hardly found; and the young scholar groans in spirit, and perhaps does as Milton did—quarrels with his tutor. But if he is wise he will, as Milton also did, make it up again, and get the most that he can from his stony-hearted stepmother before the time comes for him to bid her his *Vale vale et æternum vale.*

Milton remained seven years at Cambridge—from 1625 to 1632—from his sixteenth to his twenty-fourth year. Any intention or thought he ever may have had of taking orders he seems early to have rejected with a characteristic scorn. He considered a state of subscription to articles a state of slavery, and Milton was always determined, whatever else he was or might become, to be his own man. Though never in sympathy with the governing tone of the place, there is no reason to suppose that Milton (any more than others) found this lack seriously to interfere with a fair amount of good solid enjoyment from day to day. He had friends who courted his society, and pursuits both grave and gay to occupy his hours of study and relaxation. He was called the "Lady" of his college, on account of his personal beauty and the purity and daintiness of his life and conversation.

After leaving Cambridge Milton began his life, so attractive to one's thoughts, at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, where his father had a house in which his mother was living. Here, for five years, from his twenty-fourth to his twenty-ninth year—a period often stormy in the lives of poets—he continued his work of self-education. Some of his Cambridge friends appear to have grown a little anxious on seeing one who had distinction stamped upon his brow doing what the world calls nothing; and Milton himself was watchful, and even suspicious. His second sonnet records this state of feeling:

> How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
> Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
> My hasting days fly on with full career,
> But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.

And yet no poet had ever a more beautiful spring-tide, though it was restless, as spring should be, with the promise of greater things and "high mid-summer pomps." These latter it was that were postponed almost too long.

Milton at Horton made up his mind to be a great poet—neither more nor less; and with that end in view he toiled unceasingly. A more solemn dedication of a man by himself to the poetical office cannot be imagined. Everything about him became as it were pontifical, almost sacramental. A poet's soul must contain the perfect shape of all things good, wise, and just. His body must be spotless and without blemish, his life pure, his thoughts high, his studies intense. There was no drinking at the "Mermaid" for John Milton. His thoughts, like his joys, were not those that

> Are in widest commonalty spread.

When in his walks he met the Hodge of his period, he is more likely to have thought of a line in Virgil than of stopping to have a chat with the poor fellow. He became a student of the Italian language, and writes to a friend: "I who certainly have not merely wetted the tip of my lips in the stream of these (the classical) languages, but in proportion to my years have swallowed the most copious draughts, can yet sometimes retire with avidity and delight to feast on Dante, Petrarch, and many others; nor has Athens itself been able to confine me to the transparent waves of its Ilissus, nor ancient Rome to the banks of its Tiber, so as to prevent my visiting with delight the streams of the Arno and the hills of Fæsolæ."

Now it was that he, in his often-quoted words written to the young Diodati, doomed to an early death, was meditating "an immortality of fame," letting his wings grow and preparing to fly. But dreaming though he ever was of things to come, none the less it was at Horton he composed *Comus*, *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso*, poems which enable us half sadly to realise how much went and how much was sacrificed to make the author of *Paradise Lost*.

After five years' retirement Milton began to feel the want of a little society, of the kind that is "quiet, wise and good," and he meditated taking chambers in one of the Inns of Court, where he could have a pleasant and shady walk under "immemorial elms," and also enjoy the advantages of a few choice associates at home and an elegant society abroad. The death of his mother in 1637 gave his thoughts another direction, and he obtained his father's permission to travel in Italy, "that woman-country, wooed not wed," which has been the mistress of so many poetical hearts, and was so of John Milton's. His friends and relatives saw but one difficulty in the way. John Milton the younger, though not at this time a Nonconformist, was a stern and unbending Protestant, and was as bitter an opponent of His Holiness the Pope as he certainly would have been, had his days been prolonged, of His Majesty the Pretender.

There is something very characteristic in this almost inflamed hostility in the case of a man with such a love of beauty and passion for architecture and music as always abided in Milton, and who could write:

But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloisters pale,
And love the high embowèd roof,
With antique pillars massy-proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim, religious light.
There let the pealing organ flow
To the full-voiced quire below,
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstacies,
And bring all heaven before my eyes.

Here surely is proof of an æsthetic nature beyond most of our modern raptures; but none the less, and at the very same time, Rome was for Milton the "grim wolf" who "with privy paw, daily devours apace." It is with a sigh of sad sincerity that Dr. Newman admits that Milton breathes through his pages a hatred of the Catholic Church, and consequently the Cardinal feels free to call him a proud and rebellious creature of God. That Milton was both proud and rebellious cannot be disputed. Nonconformists need not claim him for their own with much eagerness. What he thought of Presbyterians we know, and he was never a church member, or indeed a churchgoer. Dr. Newman has admitted that the poet Pope was an unsatisfactory Catholic; Milton was certainly an unsatisfactory Dissenter. Let us be candid in these matters. Milton was therefore bidden by his friends, and by those with whom he took counsel, to hold his peace whilst in Rome about the "privy wolf," and he promised to do so, adding, however, the Miltonic proviso that this was on condition that the Papists did not attack his religion first. "If anyone," he wrote, "in the very city of the Pope, attacked the orthodox religion, I

defended it most freely." To call the Protestant religion, which had not yet attained to its second century, the orthodox religion under the shadow of the Vatican was to have the courage of his opinions. But Milton was not a man to be frightened of schism. That his religious opinions should be peculiar probably seemed to him to be almost inevitable, and not unbecoming. He would have agreed with Emerson, who declares that would man be great he must be a Nonconformist.

There is something very fascinating in the records we have of Milton's one visit to the Continent. A more impressive Englishman never left our shores. Sir Philip Sidney perhaps approaches him nearest. Beautiful beyond praise, and just sufficiently conscious of it to be careful never to appear at a disadvantage, dignified in manners, versed in foreign tongues, yet full of the ancient learning,—a gentleman, a scholar, a poet, a musician, and a Christian,—he moved about in a leisurely manner from city to city, writing Latin verses for his hosts and Italian sonnets in their ladies' albums, buying books and music, and creating, one cannot doubt, an all too flattering impression of an English Protestant. To travel in Italy with Montaigne or Milton, or Evelyn or Gray, or Shelley, or, pathetic as it is, with the dying Sir Walter, is perhaps more instructive than to go there for yourself with a tourist's ticket. Old Montaigne, who was but forty-seven when he made his journey, and whom therefore I would not call old had not Pope done so before me, is the most delightful of travelling companions, and as easy as an old shoe. A humaner man than Milton, a wiser man than Evelyn—with none of the constraint of

Gray, or the strange though fascinating outlandishness of Shelley—he perhaps was more akin to Scott than any of the other travellers; but Scott went to Italy an overwhelmed man, whose only fear was he might die away from the heather and the murmur of Tweed. However, Milton is the most improving companion of them all, and amidst the impurities of Italy, "in all the places where vice meets with so little discouragement, and is protected with so little shame," he remained the Milton of Cambridge and Horton, and did nothing to pollute the pure temple of a poet's mind. He visited Paris, Nice, Genoa, Pisa, and Florence, staying in the last city two months, and living on terms of great intimacy with seven young Italians, whose musical names he duly records. These were the months of August and September, not nowadays reckoned safe months for Englishmen to be in Florence—modern lives being raised in price. From Florence he proceeded through Siena to Rome, where he also stayed two months. There he was present at a magnificent entertainment given by the Cardinal Francesco Barberini in his palace, and heard the singing of the celebrated Leonora Baroni. It is not for one moment to be supposed that he sought an interview with the Pope, as Montaigne had done, who was exhorted by his holiness "to persevere in the devotion he had ever manifested in the cause of the Church"; and yet perhaps (so subtle are the ways of Literature) Montaigne by his Essays did more to sap the authority of Peter's Chair than Milton, however willing, was able to do.

It has been remarked that Milton's chief enthusiasm in Italy was not art, but music, which

falls in with Coleridge's *dictum*, that Milton is not so much a picturesque as a musical poet—meaning thereby, I suppose, that the effects which he produces and the scenes which he portrays are rather suggested to us by the rhythm of his lines than by actual verbal descriptions. From Rome Milton went to Naples, from whence he had intended to go to Sicily and Greece, but the troubles beginning at home he forwent this pleasure, and consequently never saw Athens, which was surely a great pity. He returned to Rome, where, troubles or no troubles, he stayed another two months. From Rome he went back to Florence, which he found too pleasant to leave under two more months. Then he went to Lucca, and so to Venice, where he was very stern with himself, and only lingered a month. From Venice he went to Milan, and then over the Alps to Geneva, where he had dear friends. He was back in London in August 1639, after an absence of fifteen months.

The times were troubled enough. Poor Charles I., whose literary taste was so good that one must regret the mischance that placed a crown upon his comely head, was trying hard, at the bidding of a priest, to thrust Episcopacy down Scottish throats who would not have it at any price. He was desperately in need of money, and the House of Commons (which had then a *raison d'être*) was not prepared to give him any except on terms. Altogether it was an exciting time, but Milton was in no way specially concerned in it. Milton looms so large in our imagination amongst the figures of the period, that, despite Dr. Johnson's sneers, we are apt to forget his political insignificance, and to

fancy him curtailing his tour and returning home to take his place amongst the leaders of the Parliament men. Return home he did, but it was, as another pedagogue has reminded us, to receive boys "to be boarded and instructed." Dr. Johnson tells us that we ought not to allow our veneration for Milton to rob us of a joke at the expense of a man "who hastens home because his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and when he reaches the scene of action vapours away his patriotism in a private boarding-school"; but that this observation was dictated by the good Doctor's spleen is made plain by his immediately proceeding to point out, with his accustomed good sense, that there is really nothing to laugh at, since it was desirable that Milton, whose father was alive and could only make him a small allowance, should do something, and there was no shame in his adopting an honest and useful employment.

To be a Parliament man was no part of the ambition of one who still aspired to be a poet; who was not yet blind to the heavenly vision; who was still meditating what should be his theme, and who in the meantime chastised his sister's sons, unruly lads, who did him no credit and bore him no great love.

The Long Parliament met in November 1640, and began its work,—brought Strafford to the scaffold, clapped Laud into the Tower, Archbishop though he was, and secured as best they could the permanency of parliamentary institutions. None of these things specially concerned John Milton. But there also uprose the eternal Church question, "What sort of Church are we to have?" The

fierce controversy raged, and "its fair enticing fruit," spread round "with liberal hand," proved too much for the father of English epic.

> He scrupled not to eat
> Against his better knowledge.

In other words, he commenced pamphleteer, and between May 1641 and the following March he had written five pamphlets against Episcopacy, and used an intolerable deal of bad language, which, however excusable in a heated controversialist, ill became the author of *Comus*.

The war broke out in 1642, but Milton kept house. The "tented field" had no attractions for him.

In the summer of 1643 he took a sudden journey into the country, and returned home to his boys with a wife, the daughter of an Oxfordshire Cavalier. Mary Powell was but seventeen, her poetic lord was thirty-five. From the country-house of a rollicking squire to Aldersgate Street was somewhat too violent a change. She had left ten brothers and sisters behind her, the eldest twenty-one, the youngest four. As one looks upon this picture and on that, there is no need to wonder that the poor girl was unhappy. The poet, though keenly alive to the subtle charm of a woman's personality, was unpractised in the arts of daily companionship. He expected to find much more than he brought of general good-fellowship. He had an ideal ever in his mind of both bodily and spiritual excellence, and he was almost greedy to realise both, but he knew not how. One of his complaints was that his wife was mute and insensate, and sat silent at his board. It must, no doubt, have been deadly dull, that house in Alders-

gate Street. Silence reigned, save when broken by the cries of the younger Phillips sustaining chastisement. Milton had none of that noble humanitarian spirit which had led Montaigne long years before him to protest against the cowardly traditions of the schoolroom. After a month of Aldersgate Street, Mrs. Milton begged to go home. Her wish was granted, and she ran back to her ten brothers and sisters, and when her leave of absence was up refused to return. Her husband was furiously angry; and in a time so short as almost to enforce the belief that he began the work during the honeymoon, was ready with his celebrated pamphlet, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce restored to the good of both sexes*. He is even said, with his accustomed courage, to have paid attentions to a Miss Davis, who is described as a very handsome and witty gentlewoman, and therefore not one likely to sit silent at his board; but she was a sensible girl as well, and had no notion of a married suitor. Of Milton's pamphlet it is everyone's duty to speak with profound respect. It is a noble and passionate cry for a high ideal of married life, which, so he argued, had by inflexible laws been changed into a drooping and disconsolate household captivity, without refuge or redemption. He shuddered at the thought of a man and woman being condemned, for a mistake of judgment, to be bound together to their unspeakable wearisomeness and despair, for, he says, not to be beloved and yet retained is the greatest injury to a gentle spirit. Our present doctrine of divorce, which sets the household captive free on payment of a broken vow, but on no less ignoble terms, is

not founded on the congruous, and is indeed already discredited if not disgraced.

This pamphlet on divorce marks the beginning of Milton's mental isolation. Nobody had a word to say for it. Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Independent held his doctrine in as much abhorrence as did the Catholic, and all alike regarded its author as either an impracticable dreamer or worse. It was written certainly in too great haste, for his errant wife, actuated by what motives cannot now be said, returned to her allegiance, was mindful of her plighted troth, and, suddenly entering his room, fell at his feet and begged to be forgiven. She was only nineteen, and she said it was all her mother's fault. Milton was not a sour man, and though perhaps too apt to insist upon repentance preceding forgiveness, yet when it did so he could forgive divinely. In a very short time the whole family of Powells, whom the war had reduced to low estate, were living under his roof in the Barbican, whither he moved on the Aldersgate house proving too small for his varied belongings. The poet's father also lived with his son. Mrs. Milton had four children, three of whom, all daughters, lived to grow up. The mother died in childbirth in 1652, being then twenty-six years of age.

The *Areopagitica, a Speech for Unlicensed Printing*, followed the divorce pamphlet, but it also fell upon deaf ears. Of all religious sects the Presbyterians, who were then dominant, are perhaps the least likely to forgo the privilege of interference in the affairs of others. Instead of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, instead of "a lordly Imprimatur, one from Lambeth House,

another from the west end of Paul's," there was appointed a commission of twenty Presbyterians to act as State Licensers. Then was Milton's soul stirred within him to a noble rage. His was a threefold protest—as a citizen of a State he fondly hoped had been free, as an author, and as a reader. As a citizen he protested against so unnecessary and improper an interference. It is not, he cried, "the unfrocking of a priest, the unmitring of a bishop, that will make us a happy nation," but the practice of virtue, and virtue means freedom to choose. Milton was a manly politician, and detested with his whole soul grandmotherly legislation. "He who is not trusted with his own actions, his drift not being known to be evil, and standing to the hazard of law and penalty, has no great argument to think himself reputed in the commonwealth wherein he was born for other than a fool or a foreigner." "They are not skilful considerers of human things who imagine to remove sin by removing the matter of sin." "And were I the chooser, a dram of well-doing should be preferred before many times as much the forcible hindrance of evil doing." These are texts upon which sermons, not inapplicable to our own day, might be preached. Milton has made our first parent so peculiarly his own that any observations of his about Adam are interesting. "Many there be that complain of Divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! When God gave him reason He gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam. We ourselves esteem not of that obedience a love or gift which is of force. God

therefore left him free, set before him a provoking object ever almost in his eyes; herein consisted his merit, herein the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence." So that according to Milton even Eden was a state of trial. As an author, Milton's protest has great force. "And what if the author shall be one so copious of fancy as to have many things well worth the adding come into his mind after licensing, while the book is yet under the press, which not seldom happens to the best and diligentest writers, and that perhaps a dozen times in one book. The printer dares not go beyond his licensed copy. So often then must the author trudge to his leave-giver that those his new insertions may be viewed, and many a jaunt will be made ere that licenser—for it must be the same man—can either be found, or found at leisure; meanwhile either the press must stand still, which is no small damage, or the author lose his accuratest thoughts, and send forth a book worse than he made it, which to a diligent writer is the greatest melancholy and vexation that can befall."

Milton would have had no licensers. Every book should bear the printer's name, and "mischievous and libellous books" were to be burnt by the common hangman, not as an effectual remedy, but as the "most effectual remedy man's prevention can use."

The noblest pamphlet in "our English, the language of men ever famous and foremost in the achievements of liberty," accomplished nothing, and its author must already have thought himself fallen on evil days.

In the year 1645, the year of Naseby, as Mr. Pattison reminds us, appeared the first edition of

Milton's Poems. Then, for the first time, were printed *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, the *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, and various of the sonnets. The little volume also contained *Comus* and *Lycidas*, which had been previously printed. With the exception of three sonnets and a few scraps of translation, Milton had written nothing but pamphlets since his return from Italy. At the beginning of the volume, which is a small octavo, was a portrait of the poet, most villainously executed. He was really thirty-seven, but flattered himself, as men of that age will, that he looked ten years younger; he was therefore much chagrined to find himself represented as a grim-looking gentleman of at least fifty. The way he revenged himself upon the hapless artist is well known. The volume, with the portrait, is now very scarce, almost rare.

In 1647 Milton removed from the Barbican, both his father and his father-in-law being dead, to a smaller house in Holborn, backing upon Lincoln's Inn Fields, close to where the Inns of Court Hotel now stands, and not far from the spot which was destined to witness the terrible tragedy which was at once to darken and glorify the life of one of Milton's most fervent lovers, Charles Lamb. About this time he is supposed to have abandoned pedagogy. The habit of pamphleteering stuck to him; indeed, it is one seldom thrown off. It is much easier to throw off the pamphlets.

In 1649 Milton became a public servant, receiving the appointment of Latin Secretary to the Council of Foreign Affairs. He knew some member of the Committee, who obtained his nomination.

His duties were purely clerkly. It was his business to translate English despatches into Latin, and foreign despatches into English. He had nothing whatever to do with the shaping of the foreign policy of the Commonwealth. He was not even employed in translating the most important of the State papers. There is no reason for supposing that he even knew the leading politicians of his time. There is a print one sees about, representing Oliver Cromwell dictating a foreign despatch to John Milton; but it is all imagination, nor is there anything to prove that Cromwell and Milton, the body and soul of English Republicanism, were ever in the same room together, or exchanged words with one another. Milton's name does not occur in the great history of Lord Clarendon. Whitelocke, who was the leading member of the Committee which Milton served, only mentions him once. Thurloe spoke of him as a blind man who wrote Latin letters. Richard Baxter, in his folio history of his Life and Times, never mentions Milton at all.[1] He was just a clerk in the service of the Commonwealth, of a scholarly bent, peculiar habit of thought, and somewhat of an odd temper. He was not the man to cultivate great acquaintances, or to fritter away his time waiting the convenience of other people. When once asked to use his influence to obtain for a friend an appointment, he replied he had no influence, "propter paucissimas familiaritates meas cum gratiosis, qui domi fere, idque libenter, me contineo." The busy great men of the day would have been more than astonished, they would have been disgusted, had

[1] See note to Mitford's *Milton*, Vol. I. clii.

they been told that posterity would refer to most of them compendiously, as having lived in the age of Milton. But this need not trouble us.

On the Continent Milton enjoyed a wider reputation, on account of his controversy with the great European scholar, Salmasius, on the sufficiently important and interesting, and then novel, subject of the execution of Charles I. Was it justifiable? Salmasius, a scholar and a Protestant, though of an easy-going description, was employed, or rather, as he had no wages (Milton's hundred *Jacobuses* being fictitious), nominated by Charles, afterwards the Second, to indict the regicides at the bar of European opinion, which accordingly he did in the Latin language. The work reached this country in the autumn of 1649, and it evidently became the duty of somebody to answer it. Two qualifications were necessary—the replier must be able to read Latin, and to write it after a manner which should escape the ridicule of the scholars of Leyden, Geneva, and Paris. Milton occurred to somebody's mind, and the task was entrusted to him. It is not to be supposed that Cromwell was ever at the pains to read Salmasius for himself, but still it would not have done to have it said that the *Defensio Regia* of so celebrated a scholar as Salmasius remained unanswered, and so the appointment was confirmed, and Milton, no new hand at a pamphlet, set to work. In March 1651 his first *Defence of the English People* was in print. In this great pamphlet Milton asserts, as against the doctrine of the divine right of kings, the undisputed sovereignty of the people; and he maintains the proposition that, as well by the law of God, as by the law of nations, and the law of

England, a king of England may be brought to trial and death, the people being discharged from all obligations of loyalty when a lawful prince becomes a tyrant, or gives himself over to sloth and voluptuousness. This noble argument, alike worthy of the man and the occasion, is doubtless overclouded and disfigured by personal abuse of Salmasius, whose relations with his wife had surely as little to do with the head of Charles I. as had poor Mr. Dick's memorial. Salmasius, it appears, was henpecked, and to allow yourself to be henpecked was, in Milton's opinion, a high crime and misdemeanour against humanity, and one which rendered a man infamous, and disqualified him from taking part in debate.

It has always been reported that Salmasius, who was getting on in years, and had many things to trouble him besides his own wife, perished in the effort of writing a reply to Milton, in which he made use of language quite as bad as any of his opponent's; but it now appears that this is not so. Indeed, it is generally rash to attribute a man's death to a pamphlet, or an article, either of his own or anybody else's.

Salmasius, however, died, though from natural causes, and his reply was not published till after the Restoration, when the question had become, what it has ever since remained, academical.

Other pens were quicker, and to their productions Milton, in 1654, replied with his *Second Defence of the English People*, a tract containing autobiographical details of immense interest and charm. By this time he was totally blind, though, with a touch of that personal sensitiveness ever

characteristic of him, he is careful to tell Europe, in the *Second Defence*, that externally his eyes were uninjured, and shone with an unclouded light.

Milton's *Defences of the English People* are rendered provoking by his extraordinary language concerning his opponents. "Numskull," "beast," "fool," "puppy," "knave," "ass," "mongrel-cur," are but a few of the epithets that may be selected for this descriptive catalogue. This is doubtless mere matter of pleading, a rule of the forum where controversies between scholars are conducted; but for that very reason it makes the pamphlets as provoking to an ordinary reader as an old bill of complaint in Chancery must have been to an impatient suitor who wanted his money. The main issues, when cleared of personalities, are important enough, and are stated by Milton with great clearness. "Our king made not us, but we him. Nature has given fathers to us all, but we ourselves appointed our own king; so that the people is not for the king, but the king for them." It was made a matter of great offence amongst monarchs and monarchical persons that Charles was subjected to the indignity of a trial. With murders and poisonings kings were long familiar. These were part of the perils of the voyage, for which they were prepared, but, as Salmasius put it, "for a king to be arraigned in a court of judicature, to be put to plead for his life, to have sentence of death pronounced against him, and that sentence executed,"—oh! horrible impiety. To this Milton replies: "Tell me, thou superlative fool, whether it be not more just, more agreeable to the rules of humanity and the laws of all human

societies, to bring a criminal, be his offence what it will, before a court of justice, to give him leave to speak for himself, and if the law condemns him, then to put him to death as he has deserved, so as he may have time to repent or to recollect himself; than presently, as soon as ever he is taken, to butcher him without more ado?"

But a king of any spirit would probably answer that he preferred to have his despotism tempered by assassination than by the mercy of a court of John Miltons. To which answer Milton would have rejoined, "Despotism, I know you not, since we are as free as any people under heaven."

The weakest part in Milton's case is his having to admit that the Parliament was overawed by the army, which he says was wiser than the senators.

Milton's address to his countrymen, with which he concludes the first defence, is veritably in his "grand style":

> He has gloriously delivered you, the first of nations, from the two greatest mischiefs of this life—tyranny and superstition. He has endued you with greatness of mind to be First of Mankind, who after having confined their own king and having had him delivered into their hands, have not scrupled to condemn him judicially, and pursuant to that sentence of condemnation to put him to death. After performing so glorious an action as this, you ought to do nothing that's mean and little; you ought not to think of, much less do, anything but what is great and sublime. Which to attain to, this is your only way: as you have subdued your enemies in the field, so to make it appear that you of all mankind are best able to subdue Ambition, Avarice, the love of Riches, and can best avoid the corruptions that prosperity is apt to introduce. These are the only arguments by which you will be able to evince that you are not such persons as this fellow represents you, traitors, robbers, murderers, parricides, madmen, that you did not put your king to death out of any ambitious design—that it was not an act of fury or madness, but that it was wholly out of love to your liberty, your religion,

to justice, virtue, and your country, that you punished a tyrant. But if it should fall out otherwise (which God forbid), if, as you have been valiant in war, you should grow debauched in peace, and that you should not have learnt, by so eminent, so remarkable an example before your eyes, to fear God, and work righteousness; for my part I shall easily grant and confess (for I cannot deny it), whatever ill men may speak or think of you, to be very true. And you will find in time that God's displeasure against you will be greater than it has been against your adversaries—greater than His grace and favour have been to yourselves, which you have had larger experience of than any other nation under heaven.

This controversy naturally excited greater interest abroad, where Latin was familiarly known, than ever it did here at home. Though it cost Milton his sight, or at all events accelerated the hour of his blindness, he appears greatly to have enjoyed conducting a high dispute in the face of Europe. "I am," so he says, "spreading abroad amongst the cities, the kingdoms, and nations, the restored culture of civility and freedom of life." We certainly managed in this affair of the execution of Charles to get rid of that note of insularity which renders our politics uninviting to the stranger.

Milton, despite his blindness, remained in the public service until after the death of Cromwell; in fact, he did not formally resign until after the Restoration. He played no part, having none to play, in the performances that occurred between those events. He poured forth pamphlets, but there is no reason to believe that they were read otherwise than carelessly and by few. His ideas were his own, and never had a chance of becoming fruitful. There seemed to him to be a ready and an easy way to establish a free Commonwealth, but on the whole it turned out that the easiest

thing to do was to invite Charles Stuart to reascend the throne of his ancestors, which he did, and Milton went into hiding.

It is terrible to think how risky the situation was. Milton was undoubtedly in danger of his life, and *Paradise Lost* was unwritten. He was for a time under arrest. But after all he was not one of the regicides—he was only a scribe who had defended regicide. Neither was he a man well associated. He was a solitary, and, for the most part, an unpopular thinker, and blind withal. He was left alone for the rest of his days. He lived first in Jewin Street, off Aldersgate Street, and finally in Artillery Walk, Bunhill Fields. He had married, four years after his first wife's death, a lady who died within a twelvemonth, though her memory is kept ever fresh, generation after generation, by her husband's sonnet beginning,

Methought I saw my late espoused saint.

Dr. Johnson, it is really worth remembering, called this a poor sonnet. In 1664 Milton married a third and last wife, a lady he had never seen, and who survived her husband for no less a period than fifty-three years, not dying till the year 1727. The poet's household, like his country, never realised any of his ideals. His third wife took decent care of him, and there the matter ended. He did not belong to the category of adored fathers. His daughters did not love him—it seems even probable they disliked him. Mr. Pattison has pointed out that Milton never was on terms even with the scholars of his age. Political acquaintances he had none. He was, in puritan language, "un-

connected with any place of worship," and had therefore no pastoral visits to receive, or sermons to discuss. The few friends he had were mostly young men who were attracted to him, and were glad to give him their company; and it is well that he had this pleasure, for he was ever in his wishes a social man—not intended to live alone, and blindness must have made society little short of a necessity for him.

Now it was, in the evening of his days, with a Stuart once more upon the throne, and Episcopacy finally installed, that Milton, a defeated thinker, a baffled pamphleteer—for had not Salmasius triumphed?—with Horton and Italy far, far behind him, set himself to keep the promise of his glorious youth, and compose a poem the world should not willingly let die. His manner of life was this. In summer he rose at four, in winter at five. He went to bed at nine. He began the day with having the Hebrew Scriptures read to him. Then he contemplated. At seven his man came to him again, and read and wrote till an early dinner. For exercise he either walked in the garden or swung in a machine. Besides conversation, his only other recreation was music. He played the organ and the bass viol. He would sometimes sing himself. After recreation of this kind he would return to his study to be read to till six. After six his friends were admitted, and would sit with him till eight. At eight he had his supper—olives or something light. He was very abstemious. After supper he smoked a pipe of tobacco, drank a glass of water, and went to bed. He found the night a favourable time for composition, and what

he composed at night he dictated in the day, sitting obliquely in an elbow chair with his leg thrown over the arm.

In 1664 *Paradise Lost* was finished, but as in 1665 came the Great Plague, and after the Great Plague the Great Fire, it was long before the MS. found its way into the hands of the licenser. It is interesting to note that the first member of the general public who read *Paradise Lost*, I hope all through, was a clergyman of the name of Tomkins,[1] the deputy of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Sheldon. The Archbishop was the State Licenser for religious books, but of course did not do the work himself. Tomkins did the work, and was for a good while puzzled what to make of the old Republican's poem. At last, and after some singularly futile criticisms, Tomkins consented to allow of the publication of *Paradise Lost*, which accordingly appeared in 1667, admirably printed, and at the price of 3*s.* a copy. The author's agreement with the publisher is in writing—as Mr. Besant tells us all agreements with publishers should be—and may be seen in the British Museum. Its terms are clear. The poet was to have £5 down; another £5 when the first edition, which was not to exceed 1500 copies, was sold; a third £5 when a second edition was sold; and a fourth and last £5 when a third edition was sold. He got his first £5, also his second, and after his death his widow sold all her rights for £8. Consequently £18, which represents perhaps £50 of our present currency, was Milton's share of all the money that has been made by the sale of his great poem. But the praise

[1] See "Tomkins Redivivus," *post*, vol. iii, p. 249.

is still his. The sale was very considerable. The "general reader" no doubt preferred the poems of Cleaveland and Flatman, but Milton found an audience which was fit and not fewer than ever is the case when noble poetry is first produced.

Paradise Regained was begun upon the completion of *Paradise Lost*, and appeared with *Samson Agonistes* in 1671, and here ended Milton's life as a producing poet. He lived on till Sunday, 8th November, 1674, when the gout, or what was then called gout, struck in and he died, and was buried beside his father in the Church of St. Giles's, Cripplegate. He remained laborious to the last, and imposed upon himself all kinds of drudgery, compiling dictionaries, histories of Britain and Russia. He must have worked not so much from love of his subjects as from dread of idleness. But he had hours of relaxation, of social intercourse, and of music; and it is pleasant to remember that one pipe of tobacco. It consecrates your own.

Against Milton's great poem it is sometimes alleged that it is not read; and yet it must, I think, be admitted that for one person who has read Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, ten thousand might easily be found who have read *Paradise Lost*. Its popularity has been widespread. Mr. Mark Pattison and Mr. John Bright measure some ground between them. No other poem can be mentioned which has so coloured English thought as Milton's, and yet, according to the French senator whom Mr. Arnold has introduced to the plain reader, "*Paradise Lost* is a false poem, a grotesque poem, a tiresome poem." It is not easy for those who have a touch of Milton's temper though none of

his genius to listen to this foreign criticism quite coolly. Milton was very angry with Salmasius for venturing to find fault with the Long Parliament for having repealed so many laws, and so far forgot himself as to say, "Nam nostræ leges, Ole, quid ad te?" But there is nothing municipal about *Paradise Lost*. All the world has a right to be interested in it and to find fault with it. But the fact that the people for whom primarily it was written have taken it to their hearts and have it on their lips ought to have prevented it being called tiresome by a senator of France.

But what is the matter with our great epic? That nobody ever wished it longer is no real accusation. Nobody ever did wish an epic longer. The most popular books in the world are generally accounted too long—*Don Quixote*, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Tom Jones*. But, says Mr. Arnold, the whole real interest of the poem depends upon our being able to take it literally; and again, "Merely as matter of poetry, the story of the Fall has no special force or effectiveness—its effectiveness for us comes, and can only come, from our taking it all as the literal narrative of what positively happened." These bewildering utterances make one rub one's eyes. Carlyle comes to our relief: "All which propositions I for the present content myself with modestly but peremptorily and irrevocably denying."

Mr. Pattison surely speaks the language of ordinary good sense when he writes, "For the world of *Paradise Lost* is an ideal, conventional world quite as much as the world of the *Arabian Nights*, or the world of the chivalrous romance, or that of the pastoral novel."

Coleridge, in the twenty-second chapter of the *Biographia Literaria*, points out that the fable and characters of *Paradise Lost* are not derived from Scripture, as in the *Messiah* of Klopstock, but merely suggested by it—the illusion on which all poetry is founded being thus never contradicted. The poem proceeds upon a legend, ancient and fascinating, and to call it a commentary upon a few texts in Genesis is a marvellous criticism.

The story of the Fall of Man, as recorded in the Semitic legend, is to me more attractive as a story than the Tale of Troy, and I find the rebellion of Satan and his dire revenge more to my mind than the circles of Dante. Eve is, I think, more interesting than "Heaven-born Helen, Sparta's queen,"—I mean in herself, and as a woman to write poetry about.

The execution of the poem is another matter. So far as style is concerned its merits have not yet been questioned. As a master of style and diction, Milton is as safe as Virgil. The handling of the story is more vulnerable. The long speeches put in the mouth of the Almighty are never pleasing, and seldom effective. The weak point about argument is that it usually admits of being answered. For Milton to essay to justify the ways of God to man was well and pious enough, but to represent God Himself as doing so by argumentative process was not so well, and was to expose the Almighty to possible rebuff. The king is always present in his own courts, but as judge, not as advocate; hence the royal dignity never suffers.

It is narrated of an eminent barrister, who became a most polished judge, Mr. Knight Bruce,

that once, when at the very head of his profession, he was taken in before a Master in Chancery, an office since abolished, and found himself pitted against a little snip of an attorney's clerk, scarce higher than the table, who, nothing daunted, and by the aid of authorities he cited from a bundle of books as big as himself, succeeded in worsting Knight Bruce, whom he persisted in calling over and over again "my learned friend." Mr. Bruce treated the imp with that courtesy which is always an opponent's due, but he never went before the Masters any more.

The Archangel has not escaped the reproach often brought against affable persons of being a bit of a bore, and though this is to speak unbecomingly, it must be owned that the reader is glad whenever Adam plucks up heart of grace and gets in a word edgeways. Mr. Bagehot has complained of Milton's angels. He says they are silly. But this is, I think, to intellectualise too much. There are some classes who are fairly exempted from all obligation to be intelligent, and these airy messengers are surely amongst that number. The retinue of a prince or of a bride justify their choice if they are well-looking and group nicely.

But these objections do not touch the main issue. Here is the story of the loss of Eden, told enchantingly, musically, and in the grand style. "Who," says M. Scherer, in a passage quoted by Mr. Arnold, "can read the eleventh and twelfth books without yawning?" People, of course, are free to yawn when they please, provided they put their hands to their mouths; but in answer to this insulting question, one is glad to be able to remember how

Coleridge has singled out Adam's vision of future events contained in these books as especially deserving of attention. But to read them is to repel the charge.

There was no need for Mr. Arnold, of all men, to express dissatisfaction with Milton—

> Words which no ear ever to hear in heaven
> Expected; least of all from thee, ingrate,
> In place thyself so high above thy peers.

The first thing for people to be taught is to enjoy great things greatly. The spots on the sun may be an interesting study, but anyhow the sun is not all spots. Indeed, sometimes in the early year, when he breaks forth afresh,

> And winter, slumbering in the open air,
> Wears on her smiling face a dream of spring,

we are apt to forget that he has any spots at all, and, as he shines, are perhaps reminded of the blind poet sitting in his darkness, in this prosaic city of ours, swinging his leg over the arm of his chair, and dictating the lines—

> Seasons return, but not to me returns
> Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom or summer's rose,
> Or flocks or herds, or human face divine.
> But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
> Surrounds me—from the cheerful ways of men
> Cut off; and for the book of knowledge fair
> Presented with a universal blank
> Of nature's works, to me expunged and razed,
> And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.
> So much the rather, Thou, Celestial Light,
> Shine inwards, and the mind through all her powers
> Irradiate—*there* plant eyes; all mist from thence
> Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
> Of things invisible to mortal sight.

Coleridge added a note to his beautiful poem

The Nightingale, lest he should be supposed capable of speaking with levity of a single line in Milton. The note was hardly necessary, but one loves the spirit that prompted him to make it. Sainte-Beuve remarks: "Parler des poètes est toujours une chose bien délicate, et surtout quand on l'a été un peu soi-même." But though it does not matter what the little poets do, great ones should never pass one another without a royal salute.

ROGER NORTH'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

1894

THE Cambridge wit who some vast amount of years ago sang of Bohn's publications, "so useful to the student of Latin and Greek," hit with unerring precision the main characteristic of those very numerous volumes. Utility was the badge of all that tribe, save, indeed, of those woeful "Extra Volumes" which are as much out of place amongst their grave brethren as John Knox at a ballet. There was something in the binding of Messrs. Bohn's books which was austere, and even forbidding; their excellence, their authority, could not be denied by even a youthful desperado, but reading them always wore the stern aspect of duty. The binding had undoubtedly a good deal to do with this. It has now been discarded by Messrs. George Bell and Sons, the present proprietors, in favour of brighter colours. The difference thus effected is enormous. The old binding is kept in stock because, so we are told, "it is endeared to many book-lovers by association." The piety of Messrs. Bell has misled them. No book-lover, we feel certain, ever held one of Messrs. Bohn's publications in his hands except to read it.

A valuable addition has lately been made to the "Standard Library" by the publication—in three bright and cheerful volumes—of Roger North's well-known *Lives of the Norths*, and also—and this

practically for the first time—of Roger North's Autobiography, a book unknown to Macaulay, and which he would have read with fierce interest, bludgeon in hand, having no love for the family.

Dr. Jessopp, who edits the volumes with his accustomed skill, mentions in the Preface how the manuscript of the Autobiography belonged to the late Mr. Crossley, of Manchester, and was sold after the death of that bibliophile, in 1883, and four years later printed for private circulation. It now comes before the general public. It is not long, and deserves attention. The style is gritty and the story far from exciting, but the book is interesting, particularly for lawyers, a deserving class of readers for whose special entertainment small care is usually taken.

Roger North was born at Tostock, in Suffolk, in 1653—the youngest of his brothers. Never was man more of a younger brother than he. This book of his might be called *The Autobiography of a Younger Brother*. The elder brother was, of course, Francis, afterwards Lord Guilford, a well-hated man, both in his own day and after it, but who at all events looked well after Roger, who was some sixteen years his junior.

In 1669 Roger North was admitted a student of the Middle Temple, Francis being then a Bencher of that learned society. Roger had chambers on the west side of Middle Temple Lane, and £10 wherewith to furnish them and buy a gown, and other necessaries. He says it was not enough, but that he managed to make it serve. His excellent mother, though she had some ten children and a difficult husband, produced £30, with which he

bought law books. His father allowed him £40 a year, and he had his big brother at hand to help him out of debt now and again.

He was, we feel as we read, a little uneasy under his brother's eye. The elder North had a disagreeable fashion of putting "little contempts" upon his brother, and a way of raising his own character by depressing Roger's, which was hard to bear. But Roger North bore it bravely; he meant sticking to his brother, and stick he did. In five years he saw Francis become King's Counsel, Solicitor-General, and then "Mr. Attorney." "If he should die," writes Roger, "I am lost." But Francis did not die, which was as well, for he was much better suited for this world than the next.

Roger North was no great student of the law. He was fond of mathematics, optics, mechanics, architecture, music, and of sailing a small yacht —given him by Mr. Windham, of Felbrigge—on the Thames; and he gives in his Autobiography interesting accounts of these pastimes. He was very anxious indeed to get on and make money, but he relied more upon his brother than upon either his own brains or his own industry.

In 1674 Francis North became Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, succeeding Sir John Vaughan, the friend of Selden; and Roger at once got himself called to the Bar, and thenceforward, so far as possible, whenever Francis was on the Bench, there was Roger pleading before him. Indeed, it went much further than this. "I kept so closely to him that I can safely say I saw him abed every night without intermission for divers years together, which enables me to contradict the

malicious report a relation raised of him, that he kept a mistress as the mode of that time was." The morals of a Chief Justice two centuries after his death having no personal concern for this generation, I feel free to confess that I am rather sorry for Francis with Roger ever by his side in this unpleasantly pertinacious fashion. The younger North, so he tells us, always drove down to Westminster with the Chief Justice, and he frankly admits that his chief *appui* was his brother's character, fame, and interest. Not being a Serjeant, Roger could not actually practise in the Common Pleas, but on various circuits, at the Guildhall, at the Treasury, and wherever else he could lawfully go before the Chief Justice, there Roger went and got a business together. He also made money, sometimes as much as £9 a day, from court-keeping—that is, attending manor courts. This was a device of his elder brother's, who used to practise it before he was called to the Bar. It savours of pettifogging. However, it seems in Roger's case to have led to his obtaining the patent office of Temporal Steward to the See of Canterbury, to which he had the courage to stick after the deprivation of Archbishop Sancroft. This dogged devotion to the Church redeems North's life from a commonplaceness which would otherwise be hopeless. The Archbishop left his faithful steward £20 for a ring, but North preferred, like a wise man, to buy books, which he had bound in the Archbishop's manner.

In 1682 Roger North "took silk," as the phrase now goes, and became one of the Attorney-General's devils, in which capacity his name is to be found in

the reports of the trial of Lord William Russell. What he says about that trial in the Autobiography is just what might be expected from an Attorney-General's devil—that is, that never before was a State trial conducted with such candour and fairness. He admits that this is not the judgment of the world; but then, says he, "the world never did nor will understand its true good, or reward, encourage, or endure its true patriots and friends."

At the end of 1683 Francis North came home one night with no less remarkable a companion in his coach than the Great Seal. Roger instantly transposed himself to the Court of Chancery, where he began coining money. "My whole study," he says, "is causes and motions." He found it hard work, but he buckled to, and boasts—like so many of his brethren, alive as well as dead—that he, at all events, always read his briefs. In the first year his fees amounted to £4000, in the second to nearly as much, but in the third there was a falling off, owing to a smaller quantity of business in the Court. A new Lord Keeper was always the occasion of the rehearing of old causes. The defeated litigants wished to try their luck before the new man.

North was at first astonished with the size of the fees he was offered; he even refused them, thinking them bribes: "but my fellow-practisers' conversation soon cured me of that nicety." And yet the biggest fee he ever got was twenty guineas. Ten guineas was the usual fee on a "huge" brief, and five "in the better sort of causes." In ordinary cases Roger North would take two or three guineas, and one guinea for motions and defences.

In the Long Vacations Roger still stuck to his brother, who, no doubt, found him useful. Thus when the Mayor, Aldermen, and Council of Banbury came over to Wroxton to pay their respects to the Lord Keeper, they were handed over to the charge of Roger, who walked them all over the house to show the rooms, and then made them drunk at dinner "and dismissed them to their lodgings in ditches homeward bound." But the effort was too much for him, and no sooner were they gone than he had to lie down, all on fire, upon the ground, from which he rose very sick and scarce recovered in some days. As a rule he was a most temperate man, and hated the custom and extravagance of drinking. He had not enough understanding to obfuscate it by drink.

All went well with the brothers until the death of Charles II. Then the horizon grew troubled—but still Roger was being talked of as a Baron of the Exchequer, when the Lord Keeper died on September 5th, 1685. With him ended the public life of his younger brother. Roger North was only thirty-two. He was a King's Counsel, and in considerable practice, but he had not the will—perhaps he had not the force—to stand alone. At the Revolution he became a non-juror, and retired into the country. His Autobiography also ceases with his brother's death.

He had much private family business to transact, and in 1690 he bought the Rougham estate in Norfolk, where he carried on building and planting on a considerable scale. He married and had children, bought books, restored the parish church, and finally died on March 1st, 1734, in his eighty-first year.

Dr. Jessopp tells us very little is left of Roger North—his house has been pulled down, his trees pulled up, and his books dispersed. But his Lives of his three brothers, and now the Autobiography of himself, will keep his memory green. There is something about him one rather likes, though were we asked what it is, we should have no answer ready.

POPE

1887

THE eighteenth century has been well abused by the nineteenth. So far as I can gather, it is the settled practice of every century to speak evil of her immediate predecessor, and I have small doubt that, had we gone groping about in the tenth century, we should yet have been found hinting that the ninth was darker than she had any need to be.

But our tone of speaking about the last century has lately undergone an alteration. The fact is, we are drawing near our own latter end. The Head Master of Harrow lately thrilled an audience by informing them that he had, that very day, entered an existing *bona fide* boy upon the school books, whose education, however, would not begin till the twentieth century. As a parent was overheard to observe, "an illustration of that sort comes home to one." The older we grow the less confident we become, the readier to believe that our judgments are probably wrong, and liable, and even likely, to be reversed; the better disposed to live and let live. The child, as Mr. Browning has somewhere elaborated, cries for the moon and beats its nurse, but the old man sips his gruel with avidity and thanks Heaven if nobody beats him. And so we have left off beating the eighteenth

century. It was not so, however, in our lusty prime. Carlyle, historian though he was of Frederick the Great and the French Revolution, revenged himself for the trouble it gave him by loading it with all vile epithets. If it had been a cock or a cook he could not have called it harder names. It was century spendthrift, fraudulent bankrupt, a swindler century, which did but one true action, "namely, to blow its brains out in that grand universal suicide named French Revolution."

The leaders of the neo-Catholic movement very properly shuddered at a century which whitewashed its churches and thought even monthly communions affected. The ardent Liberal could not but despise a century which did without the franchise, and, despite the most splendid materials, had no Financial Reform Almanack. The sentimental Tory found little to please him in the House of Hanover and Whig domination. The lovers of poetry, with Shelley in their ears and Wordsworth at their hearts, made merry with the trim muses of Queen Anne, with their sham pastorals, their dilapidated classicism, and still more with their town-bred descriptions of the country, with its purling brooks and nodding groves, and, hanging over all, the moon—not Shelley's "orbed maiden," but "the refulgent lamp of night." And so, on all hands, the poor century was weighed in a hundred different balances and found wanting. It lacked inspiration, unction, and generally all those things for which it was thought certain the twentieth century would commend us. But we do not talk like that now. The waters of the sullen Lethe,

rolling doom, are sounding too loudly in our own ears. We would die at peace with all centuries. Mr. Frederick Harrison writes a formal *Defence of the Eighteenth Century*. Mr. Matthew Arnold reprints half-a-dozen of Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. Mr. Leslie Stephen composes a history of thought during this objurgated period, and also edits, in sumptuously inconvenient volumes, the works of its two great novelists, Richardson and Fielding; and, finally, there now trembles on the very verge of completion a splendid and long-laboured edition of the poems and letters of the great poet of the eighteenth century, the abstract and brief chronicle of his time, a man who had some of its virtues and most of its vices, one whom it is easy to hate, but still easier to quote—Alexander Pope.

Twenty years ago the chances were that a lecture on Pope began by asking the, perhaps not impertinent, question, "Was he a poet?" And the method had its merits, for the question once asked it was easy for the lecturer, like an incendiary who has just fired a haystack, to steal away amidst the cracklings of a familiar controversy. It was not unfitting that so quarrelsome a man as Pope should have been the occasion of so much quarrelsomeness in others. For long the battle waged as fiercely over Pope's poetry as erst it did in his own *Homer* over the body of the slain Patroclus. Stout men took part in it, notably Lord Byron, whose letters to Mr. Bowles on the subject, though composed in his lordship's most ruffianly vein, still make good reading—of a sort. But the battle is over, at all events for the present. It is not now

our humour to inquire too curiously about first causes or primal elements. As we are not prepared with a definition of poetry, we feel how impossible it would be for us to deny the rank of a poet to one whose lines not infrequently scan and almost always rhyme. For my part, I should as soon think of asking whether a centipede has legs or a wasp a sting as whether the author of the *Rape of the Lock* and the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* was or was not a poet.

Pope's life has been described as a succession of petty secrets and third-rate problems, but there seems to be no doubt that it began on May 21st, 1688, in Lombard Street, in the city of London. But this event over, mystery steps in with the question, What was his father? The occupation of the elder Pope occasioned nearly as fierce a controversy as the poetical legitimacy of the younger. Malice has even hinted that old Pope was a hatter. The poet, of course, knew, but wouldn't tell, being always more ready, as Johnson observes, to say what his father was not than what he was. He denied the hatter, and said his father was of the family of the Earls of Downe; but on this statement being communicated to a relative of the poet, the brutal fellow, who was probably without a tincture of polite learning, said he heard of the relationship for the first time! "Hard as thy heart, and as thy birth obscure," sang one of Pope's too numerous enemies in the easy numbers he had taught his age. It is, however, now taken as settled that the elder Pope, like Izaak Walton and John Gilpin, and many other good fellows, was a linen-draper. He made money, and one would

like to know how he did it in the troublesome times he lived in; but *his* books have all perished. He was a Roman Catholic, as also was the poet's mother, who was her husband's second wife, and came out of Yorkshire. It used to be confidently asserted that the elder Pope, on retiring from business, which he did early in the poet's childhood, put his fortune in a box and spent it as he needed it—a course of conduct the real merits of which are likely to be hid from a lineal descendant. Old Pope, however, did nothing of the kind, but invested money in the French funds, his conscience not allowing him to do so in the English, and he also lent sums on bond to fellow Catholics, one of whom used to remit him his half-year's interest calculated at the rate of £4 per cent. per annum, whereas by the terms of the bond he was to pay £4½ per cent. per annum. On another occasion the same borrower deducted from the interest accrued due a pound he said he had lent the youthful poet. These things annoyed the old gentleman, as they would most old gentlemen of my acquaintance. The poet was the only child of his mother, and a queerly constituted mortal he was. Dr. Johnson has recorded the long list of his infirmities with an almost chilling bluntness; but alas! so malformed was Pope's character, so tortuous and twisted were his ways, so elaborately artificial and detestably petty many of his devices, that it is not malice but charity that bids us remember that, during his whole maturity, he could neither dress nor undress himself, go to bed or get up without help, and that on rising he had to be invested into a stiff canvas bodice and tightly laced, and have put on him a

fur doublet and numerous stockings to keep off the cold and fill out his shrunken form. If ever there was a man whose life was one long provocation that man was the author of the *Dunciad*. Pope had no means of self-defence save his wit. Dr. Johnson was a queer fellow enough, having inherited, as he tells us, a vile melancholy from his father, and he certainly was no Adonis to look at, but those who laughed at him were careful to do so behind his gigantic back. When a rapacious bookseller insulted him he knocked him down. When the caricaturist Foote threatened to take him off upon the stage, the most Christian of lexicographers caused it to be intimated to him that if he did the author of *Rasselas* would thrash him in the public street, and the buffoon desisted. "Did not Foote," asked Boswell, "think of exhibiting you, sir?" and our great moralist replied, "Sir, fear restrained him, he knew I would have broken his bones." When he denounced Macpherson for his *Ossian* frauds, and the irate Celt said something about personal chastisement, Johnson told him, in writing, that he was not to be deterred from detecting a cheat by the menaces of a ruffian, and by way of a temporary provision for his self-defence selected a most grievous cudgel, six feet in height, and terminating in a head (once the root) of the size of a large orange. The possession of great physical strength is no mean assistance to a straightforward life. The late Professor Fawcett, who, though blind, delighted, arm-in-arm with a friend, to skate furiously on the fens, never could be brought to share the fears entertained on his behalf by some of the less stalwart of his acquaintances.

"Why," he used to exclaim apologetically, "even if I do run up against anybody, it is always the other fellow who gets the worst of it." But Pope, whom a child could hustle, had no such resources. We should always remember this, it is brutal to forget it.

Pope's parents found in their only son the vocation of their later life. He might be anything he liked. Did he lisp in numbers, the boyish rhymes were duly scanned and criticised; had he a turn for painting, lessons were provided. He might be anything he chose, and everything by turns. Many of us have been lately reading chapters from the life of another only son, and though the comparison may not bear working out, still, that there were points of strong similarity between the days of the youthful poet at Binfield and those of Ruskin at Herne Hill may be suspected. Pope's education was, of course, private, for a double reason—his proscribed faith and his frail form. Mr. Leslie Stephen, with a touching faith in public schools, has the hardihood to regret that it was obviously impossible to send Pope to Westminster. One shudders at the thought. It could only have ended in an inquest. As it was, the poor little cripple was whipped at Twyford for lampooning his master. Pope was extraordinarily sensitive. Cruelty to animals he abhorred. Every kind of sport, from spinning cockchafers to coursing hares, he held in loathing, and one cannot but be thankful that the childhood of this supersensitive poet was shielded from the ruffianism of the nether world of boys as that brood then existed. Westminster had not long to wait for Cowper. Pope was taught his

rudiments by stray priests and at small seminaries, where, at all events, he had his bent, and escaped the contagious error that Homer wrote in Greek in order that English boys might be beaten. Of course he did not become a scholar. Had he done so he probably would not have translated Homer, though he might have lectured on how not to do it. Indeed, the only evidence we have that Pope knew Greek at all is that he translated Homer, and was accustomed to carry about with him a small pocket edition of the bard in the original. Latin he could probably read with decent comfort, though it is noticeable that if he had occasion to refer to a Latin book, and there was a French translation, he preferred the latter version to the original. Voltaire, who knew Pope, asserts that he could not speak a word of French, and could hardly read it; but Voltaire was not a truthful man, and on one occasion told lies in an affidavit. The fact is, Pope's curiosity was too inordinate—his desire to know everything all at once too strong to admit of the delay of learning a foreign language; and he was consequently a reader of translations, and he lived in an age of translations. He was, as a boy, a simply ferocious reader, and was early acquainted with the contents of the great poets, both of antiquity and the modern world. His studies, at once intense, prolonged, and exciting, injured his feeble health, and made him the life-long sufferer he was. It was a noble zeal, and arose from the immense interest Pope ever took in human things.

From 1700 to 1715, that is, from his fourteenth to his twenty-ninth year, he lived with his father

and mother at Binfield, on the borders of Windsor Forest, which he made the subject of one of his early poems, against which it was alleged, with surely some force, that it has nothing distinctive about it, and might as easily have been written about any other forest; to which, however, Dr. Johnson characteristically replied that the *onus* lay upon the critic of first proving that there is anything distinctive about Windsor Forest, which personally he doubted, one green field in the Doctor's opinion being just like another. In 1715 Pope moved with his parents to Chiswick, where in 1717 his father, aged seventy-five, died. The following year the poet again moved with his mother to the celebrated villa at Twickenham, where in 1733 she died, in her ninety-third year. Ten years later Pope's long disease, his life, came to its appointed end. His poetical dates may be briefly summarised thus: his *Pastorals*, 1709; the *Essay on Criticism*, 1711; the first version of the *Rape of the Lock*, 1712; the second, 1714; the *Iliad*, begun in 1715, was finished 1720; *Eloisa*, 1717; the *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* and the *Dunciad*, 1728; the *Essay on Man*, 1732; and then the *Epistles* and *Satires*. Of all Pope's biographers, Dr. Johnson is still, and will probably ever remain, the best. The life indeed, like the rest of the *Lives of the Poets*, is a lazy performance. It is not the strenuous work of a young author eager for fame. When Johnson sat down, at the instance of the London booksellers, to write the lives of those poets whose works his employers thought it well to publish, he had long been an author at grass, and had no mind

whatever again to wear the collar. He had great reading and an amazing memory, and those were at the service of the trade. The facts he knew, or which were brought to his door, he recorded, but research was not in his way. Was he not already endowed—with a pension, which, with his customary indifference to attack, he wished were twice as large, in order that his enemies might make twice as much fuss over it? None the less —nay, perhaps all the more—for being written with so little effort, the *Lives of the Poets* are delightful reading, and Pope's is one of the very best of them.[1] None knew the infirmities of ordinary human nature better than Johnson. They neither angered him nor amused him; he neither storms, sneers, nor chuckles as he records man's vanity, insincerity, jealousy, and pretence. It is with a placid pen he pricks the bubble fame, dishonours the overdrawn sentiment, burlesques the sham philosophy of life; but for generosity, friendliness, affection, he is always on the watch, whilst talent and achievement never fail to win his admiration; he being ever eager to repay, as best he could, the debt of gratitude surely due to those who have taken pains to please, and who have left behind them in a world, which rarely treated them kindly, works fitted to stir youth to emulation, or solace the disappointments of age. And over all man's manifold infirmities he throws benignantly the mantle of his stately style. Pope's

[1] Not Horace Walpole's opinion. "Sir Joshua Reynolds has lent me Dr. Johnson's *Life of Pope*, which Sir Joshua holds to be a *chef d'œuvre*. It is a most trumpery performance, and stuffed with all his crabbed phrases and vulgarisms, and much trash as anecdotes."—*Letters*, vol. viii. p. 26.

domestic virtues were not likely to miss Johnson's approbation. Of them he writes:

> The filial piety of Pope was in the highest degree amiable and exemplary. His parents had the happiness of living till he was at the summit of poetical reputation—till he was at ease in his fortune, and without a rival in his fame, and found no diminution of his respect or tenderness. Whatever was his pride, to them he was obedient; and whatever was his irritability, to them he was gentle. Life has, amongst its soothing and quiet comforts, few things better to give than such a son.

To attempt to state in other words a paragraph like this would be indelicate, as bad as defacing a tombstone, or rewriting a collect.

Pope has had many editors, but the last edition will probably long hold the field. It is more than sixty years since the original John Murray, of Albemarle Street, determined, with the approval of his most distinguished client Lord Byron, to bring out a library edition of Pope. The task was first entrusted to Croker, the man whom Lord Macaulay hated more than he did cold boiled veal, and whose edition, had it seen the light in the great historian's lifetime, would have been, whatever its merits, well basted in the *Edinburgh Review*. But Croker seems to have made no real progress; for though occasionally advertised amongst Mr. Murray's list of forthcoming works, the first volume did not make its appearance until 1871, fourteen years after Croker's death. The new editor was the Rev. Whitwell Elwin, a clergyman with many qualifications for the task,—patient, sensible, not too fluent, but an intense hater of Pope. "To be wroth with one you love," sings Coleridge, "doth work like madness in the brain"; and to edit in numerous volumes the works of a

man you cordially dislike and always mistrust has something of the same effect, whilst it is certainly hard measure on the poor fellow edited. His lot —if I may venture upon a homely comparison founded upon a lively reminiscence of childhood —resembles that of an unfortunate infant being dressed by an angry nurse, in whose malicious hands the simplest operations of the toilet, to say nothing of the severer processes of the tub, can easily be made the vehicles of no mean torture. Good cause can be shown for hating Pope if you are so minded, but it is something of a shame to hate him and edit him too. The Rev. Mr. Elwin unravels the web of Pope's follies with too rough a hand for my liking; and he was, besides, far too apt to believe his poet in the wrong simply because somebody has said he was. For example, he reprints without comment De Quincey's absurd strictures on the celebrated lines—

> Who but must laugh if such a man there be?
> Who would not weep if Atticus were he?

De Quincey found these lines unintelligible, and pulls them about in all directions but the right one. The ordinary reader never felt any difficulty. However, Mr. Elwin kept it up till old age overtook him, and now Mr. Courthope reigns in his stead. Mr. Courthope, it is easy to see, would have told a very different tale had he been in command from the first, for he keeps sticking in a good word for the crafty little poet whenever he decently can. And this is how it should be. Mr. Courthope's Life, which will be the concluding volume of Mr. Murray's edition, is certain to be a fascinating book.

It is Pope's behaviour about his letters that is

now found peculiarly repellent. Acts of diseased egotism sometimes excite an indignation which injurious crimes fail to arouse.

The whole story is too long to be told, and is by this time tolerably familiar. Here, however, is part of it. In early life Pope began writing letters, bits of pompous insincerity, as indeed the letters of clever boys generally are, to men old enough to be his grandparents, who had been struck by his precocity and anticipated his fame; and being always master of his own time, and passionately fond of composition, he kept up the habit so formed, and wrote his letters as one might fancy the celebrated Blair composing his sermons, with much solemnity, very slowly, and without emotion. A packet of these letters addressed to a gentleman owning the once proud name of Cromwell, and who was certainly "guiltless of his country's blood,"—for all that is now known of him is that he used to go hunting in a tie-wig—had been given by that gentleman to a lady with whom he had relations, who being, as will sometimes happen, a little pressed for money, sold them for ten guineas to Edmund Curll, a bold pirate of a bookseller and publisher, upon whose head every kind of abuse has been heaped, not only by the authors whom he actually pillaged, by but succeeding generations of penmen who never took his wages, but none the less revile his name. He was a wily ruffian. In the year 1727 he was condemned by His Majesty's judges to stand in the pillory at Charing Cross for publishing a libel, and thither doubtless, at the appointed hour, many poor authors flocked, with their pockets full of the bad eggs that should have

made their breakfasts, eager to wreak vengeance upon their employer; but a printer in the pillory has advantages over other traders, and Curll had caused handbills to be struck off and distributed amongst the crowd, stating, with his usual effrontery, that he was put in the pillory for vindicating the blessed memory of Her late Majesty Queen Anne. This either touched or tickled the mob—it does not matter which—who protected Curll whilst he stood on high from further outrage, and when his penance was over bore him on their shoulders to an adjacent tavern, where (it is alleged) he got right royally drunk.[1] Ten years earlier, those pleasant youths, the Westminster scholars, had got hold of him, tossed him in a blanket, and beat him. This was the man who bought Pope's letters to Cromwell for ten guineas, and published them. Pope, oddly enough, though very angry, does not seem on this occasion to have moved the Court of Chancery, as he subsequently did against the same publisher, for an injunction to restrain the vending of the volume. Indeed, until his suit in 1741, when he obtained an injunction against Curll, restraining the sale of a volume containing some of his letters to Swift, the right of the writer of a letter to forbid its publication had never been established, and the view that a letter was a gift to the receiver had received some countenance. But Pope had so much of the true temper of a litigant, and so loved a nice point, that he might have been expected to raise the question on the first opportunity. He, however, did not do so, and the volume had a considerable sale—a fact not likely to be lost sight

[1] Howell's *State Trials*, vol. xvii. p. 159.

of by so keen an author as Pope, to whom the thought occurred, "Could I only recover all my letters, and get them published, I should be as famous in prose as I am in rhyme." His communications with his friends now begin to be full of the miscreant Curll, against whose machinations and guineas no letters were proof. Have them Curll would, and publish them he would, to the sore injury of the writer's feelings. The only way to avoid this outrage upon the privacy of true friendship was for all the letters to be returned to the writer, who had arranged for them to be received by a great nobleman, against whose strong boxes Curll might rage and surge in vain. Pope's friends did not at first quite catch his drift. "You need give yourself no trouble," wrote Swift, though at a later date than the transaction I am now describing; "every one of your letters shall be burnt." But that was not what Pope wanted. The first letters he recovered were chiefly those he had written to Mr. Caryll, a Roman Catholic gentleman of character. Mr. Caryll parted with his letters with some reluctance, and even suspicion, and was at the extraordinary pains of causing them all to be transcribed; in a word, he kept copies, and said nothing about it. Now it is that Pope set about as paltry a job as ever engaged the attention of a man of genius. He proceeded to manufacture a sham correspondence; he garbled and falsified to his heart's content. He took a bit of one letter and tagged it on to a bit of another letter, and out of these two foreign parts made up an imaginary letter, never really written to anybody, and which he addressed to Mr. Addison, who was dead, or to

whom else he chose. He did this without much regard to anything except the manufacture of something which he thought would read well, and exhibit himself in an amiable light and in a sweet, unpremeditated strain. This done, the little poet destroyed the originals, and deposited one copy, as he said he was going to do, in the library of the Earl of Oxford, whose permission so to do he sought with much solemnity, the nobleman replying with curtness that any parcel Mr. Pope chose to send to his butler should be taken care of. So far good. The next thing was to get the letters published from the copy he had retained for his own use. His vanity and love of intrigue forbad him doing so directly, and he bethought himself of his enemy, the piratical Curll, with whom, there can now be no reasonable doubt, he opened a sham correspondence under the initials "P. T." "P. T." was made to state that he had letters in his possession of Mr. Pope's, who had done him some disservice, which letters he was willing to let Curll publish. Curll was as wily as Pope, to whom he at once wrote, and told him what "P. T." was offering him. Pope replied by an advertisement in a newspaper, denying the existence of any such letters. "P. T.," however, still kept it up, and a mysterious person was introduced as a go-between, wearing a clergyman's wig and lawyer's bands. Curll at last advertised as forthcoming an edition of Mr. Pope's letters to, and, as the advertisement certainly ran, from, divers noblemen and gentlemen. Pope affected the utmost fury, and set the House of Lords upon the printer for threatening to publish peers' letters without their leave. Curll, however, had a tongue

in his head, and easily satisfied a committee of their Lordships' House that this was a mistake, and that no noblemen's letters were included in the intended publication, the unbound sheets of which he produced. The House of Lords, somewhat mystified and disgusted, gave the matter up, and the letters came out in 1735. Pope raved, but the judicious even then opined that he protested somewhat too much. He promptly got a bookseller to pirate Curll's edition—a proceeding on his part which struck Curll as the unkindest cut of all, and flagrantly dishonest. He took proceedings against Pope's publisher, but what came of the litigation I cannot say.

The Caryll copy of the correspondence as it actually existed, after long remaining in manuscript, has been published, and we have now the real letters and the sham letters side by side. The effect is grotesquely disgusting. For example, on September 20th, 1713, Pope undoubtedly wrote to Caryll as follows:

> I have been just taking a walk in St. James's Park, full of the reflections of the transitory nature of all human delights, and giving my thoughts a loose into the contemplation of those sensations of satisfaction which probably we may taste in the more exalted company of separate spirits, when we range the starry walks above and gaze on the world at a vast distance, as now we do on those.

Poor stuff enough, one would have thought. On re-reading this letter Pope was so pleased with his moonshine that he transferred the whole passage to an imaginary letter, to which he gave the, of course fictitious, date of February 10th, 1715, and addressed to Mr. Blount; so that, as the correspondence now stands, you first get the Caryll

letter of 1713, "I have been just taking a solitary walk by moonshine," and so on about the starry walks; and then you get the Blount letter of 1715, "I have been just taking a solitary walk by moonshine"; and go on to find Pope refilled with his reflections as before. Mr. Elwin does not, you may be sure, fail to note how unlucky Pope was in his second date, February 10th, 1715; that being a famous year, when the Thames was frozen over, and as the thaw set in on the 9th, and the streets were impassable even for strong men, a tender morsel like Pope was hardly likely to be out after dark. But, of course, when Pope concocted the Blount letter in 1735, and gave it any date he chose, he could not be expected to carry in his head what sort of night it was on any particular day in February twenty years before. It is ever dangerous to tamper with written documents which have been out of your sole and exclusive possession even for a few minutes.

A letter Pope published as having been addressed to Addison is made up of fragments of three letters actually written to Caryll. Another imaginary letter to Addison contains the following not inapt passage from a letter to Caryll:

> Good God! what an incongruous animal is man! how unsettled in his best part, his soul, and how changing and variable in his frame of body. What is man altogether but one mighty inconsistency?

What, indeed! The method subsequently employed by Pope to recover his letters from Swift, and to get them published in such a way as to create the impression that Pope himself had no hand in it, cannot be here narrated. It is a story

no one can take pleasure in. Of such an organised hypocrisy as this correspondence it is no man's duty to speak seriously. Here and there an amusing letter occurs, but as a whole it is neither interesting, elevating, nor amusing. When in 1741 Curll moved to dissolve the injunction Pope had obtained in connection with the Swift correspondence, his counsel argued that letters on familiar subjects and containing inquiries after the health of friends were not learned works, and consequently were not within the copyright statute of Queen Anne, which was entitled, "An Act for the Encouragement of Learning"; but Lord Hardwicke, with his accustomed good sense, would have none of this objection, and observed (and these remarks, being necessary for the judgment, are not mere *obiter dicta*, but conclusive):

> It is certain that no works have done more service to mankind than those which have appeared in this shape upon familiar subjects, and which, perhaps, were never intended to be published; and it is this which makes them so valuable, for I must confess, for my own part, that letters which are very elaborately written, and originally intended for the press, are generally the most insignificant, and very little worth any person's reading (2 Atkyns, p. 357).

I am encouraged by this authority to express the unorthodox opinion that Pope's letters, with scarcely half-a-dozen exceptions, and only one notable exception, are very little worth any person's reading.

Pope's epistolary pranks have, perhaps, done him some injustice. It has always been the fashion to admire the letter which, first appearing in 1737, in Pope's correspondence, and there attributed to Gay, describes the death by lightning of the rustic

lovers John Hewet and Sarah Drew. An identical description occurring in a letter written by Pope to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and subsequently published by Warton from the original, naturally caused the poet to be accused of pilfering another man's letter, and sending it off as his own. Mr. Thackeray so puts it in his world-famous *Lectures*, and few literary anecdotes are wider known; but the better opinion undoubtedly is that the letter was Pope's from the beginning, and attributed by him to Gay because he did not want to have it appear that on the date in question he was corresponding with Lady Mary. After all, there is a great deal to be said in favour of honesty.

When we turn from the man to the poet we have at once to change our key. A cleverer fellow than Pope never commenced author. He was in his own mundane way as determined to be a poet, and the best going, as John Milton himself. He took pains to be splendid—he polished and pruned. His first draft never reached the printer—though he sometimes said it did. This ought, I think, to endear him to us in these hasty days, when authors high and low think nothing of emptying the slops of their minds over their readers, without so much as a cry of "Heads below."

Pope's translation of the *Iliad* was his first great undertaking, and he worked at it like a Trojan. It was published by subscription for two guineas; that is, the first part was. His friends were set to work to collect subscribers. Caryll alone got thirty-eight. Pope fully entered into this. He was always alive to the value of his wares, and despised the foppery of those of his literary friends who would

not make money out of their books, but would do so out of their country. He writes to Caryll:

> But I am in good earnest of late, too much a man of business to mind metaphors and similes. I find subscribing much superior to writing, and there is a sort of little epigram I more especially delight in, after the manner of rondeaus, which begin and end all in the same words, namely—"Received" and "A. Pope." These epigrams end smartly, and each of them are tagged with two guineas. Of these, as I have learnt, you have composed several ready for me to set my name to.

This is certainly much better than that trumpery walk in the moonshine. Pope had not at this time joined the Tories, and both parties subscribed. He cleared over £5,000 by the *Iliad*. Over the *Odyssey* he slackened, and employed two inferior wits to do half the books; but even after paying his journeymen he made nearly £4,000 over the *Odyssey*. Well might he write in later life:

> Since, thanks to Homer, I do live and thrive.

Pope was amongst the first of prosperous authors, and heads the clan of cunning fellows who have turned their lyrical cry into consols, and their odes into acres.

Of the merits of this great work it is not necessary to speak at length. Mr. Edmund Yates tells a pleasant story of how one day when an old school *Homer* lay on his table, Shirley Brooks sauntered in, and taking the book up laid it down again, dryly observing, "Ah! I see you have *Homer's Iliad*! Well, I believe it is the best." And so it is. Homer's *Iliad* is the best, and Pope's *Homer's Iliad* is the second best. Whose is the third best is controversy.

Pope knew next to no Greek, but then he did not

work upon the Greek text. He had Chapman's translation ever at his elbow, also the version of John Ogilby, which had appeared in 1660—a splendid folio, with illustrations by the celebrated Hollar. Dryden had not got farther than the first book of the *Iliad*, and a fragment of the sixth book. A faithful rendering of the exact sense of Homer is not, of course, to be looked for. In the first book Pope describes the captive maid Briseis as looking back. In Homer she does not look back, but in Dryden she does; and Pope followed Dryden, and did not look, at all events, any farther back.

But what really is odd is that in Cowper's translation Briseis looks back too. Now, Cowper had been to a public school, and consequently knew Greek, and made it his special boast that, though dull, he was faithful. It is easy to make fun of Pope's version, but true scholars have seldom done so. Listen to Professor Conington:[1]

> It has been, and I hope still is, the delight of every intelligent schoolboy. They read of kings, and heroes, and mighty deeds in language which, in its calm majestic flow, unhasting, unresting, carries them on as irresistibly as Homer's own could do were they born readers of Greek, and their minds are filled with a conception of the heroic age, not indeed strictly true, but almost as near the truth as that which was entertained by Virgil himself.

Mr. D. G. Rossetti, himself both an admirable translator and a distinguished poet, has in effect laid down the first law of rhythmical translation thus: "Thou shalt not turn a good poem into a bad one." Pope kept this law.

Pope was a great adept at working upon other men's stuff. There is hardly anything in which

[1] In *Oxford Essays* for 1858.

men differ more enormously than in the degree in which they possess this faculty of utilisation. Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, which brought him great fame, and was thought a miracle of wit, was the result of much hasty reading, undertaken with the intention of appropriation. Apart from the *limæ labor*, which was enormous, and was never grudged by Pope, there was not an hour's really hard work in it. Dryden had begun the work of English criticism with his *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, and other well-known pieces. He had also translated Boileau's *Art of Poetry*. Then there were the works of those noble lords, Lord Sheffield, Lord Roscommon, Lord Granville, and the Duke of Buckingham. Pope, who loved a brief, read all these books greedily, and with an amazing quick eye for points. His orderly brain and brilliant wit re-arranged and rendered resplendent the ill-placed and ill-set thoughts of other men.

The same thing is noticeable in the most laboured production of his later life, the celebrated *Essay on Man*.[1] For this he was coached by Lord Bolingbroke.

Pope was accustomed to talk with much solemnity of his ethical system, of which the *Essay on Man* is but a fragment, but we need not trouble ourselves about it. Dr. Johnson said about *Clarissa Harlowe* that the man who read it for the story might hang himself; so we may say about the poetry of Pope: the man who reads it for its critical or ethical philosophy may hang

[1] The *Essay on Man* was written in the cedar-panelled room overlooking the Thames at Battersea, still preserved in Mayhew's flour mills.

himself. We read Pope for pleasure, but a bit of his philosophy may be given:

> Presumptuous man! the reason wouldst thou find,
> Why formed so weak, so little, and so blind?
> First, if thou canst, the harder reason guess
> Why formed no weaker, blinder, and no less?
> Ask of thy mother Earth why oaks are made
> Taller and stronger than the weeds they shade!
> Or ask of yonder argent fields above
> Why Jove's satellites are less than Jove!

To this latter interrogatory presumptuous science, speaking through the mouth of Voltaire, was ready with an answer. If Jupiter were less than his satellites they wouldn't go round him. Pope can make no claim to be a philosopher, and had he been one, verse would have been a most improper vehicle to convey his speculations. No one willingly fights in handcuffs or wrestles to music. For a man with novel truths to promulgate, or grave moral laws to expound, to postpone doing so until he had hitched them into rhyme would be to insult his mission. Pope's gifts were his wit, his swift-working mind, added to all the cunning of the craft and mystery of composition. He could say things better than other men, and hence it comes that, be he a great poet or a small one, he is a great writer, an English classic. What is it that constitutes a great writer? A bold question, certainly, but whenever anyone asks himself a question in public you may be certain he has provided himself with an answer. I find mine in the writings of a distinguished neighbour of yours,[1] himself, though living, an English classic—Cardinal Newman. He says:[2]

[1] This lecture was delivered at Birmingham.
[2] *Lectures and Essays on University Subjects;* Lecture on Literature.

"I do not claim for a great author, as such, any great depth of thought, or breadth of view, or philosophy, or sagacity, or knowledge of human nature, or experience of human life—though these additional gifts he may have, and the more he has of them the greater he is,—but I ascribe to him, as his characteristic gift, in a large sense, the faculty of expression. He is master of the two-fold λόγος, the thought and the word, distinct but inseparable from each other. . . . He always has the right word for the right idea, and never a word too much. If he is brief it is because few words suffice; if he is lavish of them, still each word has its mark, and aids, not embarrasses, the vigorous march of his elocution. He expresses what all feel, but all cannot say, and his sayings pass into proverbs amongst his people, and his phrases become household words and idioms of their daily speech, which is tessellated with the rich fragments of his language, as we see in foreign lands the marbles of Roman grandeur worked into the walls and pavements of modern palaces." Pope satisfies this definition. He has been dead one hundred and forty-two years; yet, next to Shakespeare, who has been dead two hundred and seventy years, and who was nearer to Pope than Pope is to us, he is the most quoted of English poets, the one who has most enriched our common speech. Horace used, but has long ceased, to be the poet of Parliament; for the late Prime Minister, who, more than any other, has kept alive in Parliament the scholarly traditions of the past, has never been very Horatian, preferring, whenever the dignity of the occasion seemed to demand Latin, the long roll

of the hexameter, something out of Virgil or Lucretius. The new generation of honourable members might not unprofitably turn their attention to Pope. Think how, at all events, the labour members would applaud, not with a "sad civility," but with downright cheers, a quotation they actually understood.

Pope is seen at his best in his satires and epistles, and in the mock-heroic. To say that the *Rape of the Lock* is the best mock-heroic poem in the language is to say nothing; to say that it is the best in the world is to say more than my reading warrants; but to say that it and *Paradise Regained* are the only two faultless poems, of any length, in English is to say enough.

The satires are savage—perhaps satires should be; but Pope's satires are sometimes what satires should never be—shrill. Dr. Johnson is more to my mind as a sheer satirist than Pope, for in satire character tells more than in any other form of verse. We want a personality behind—a strong, gloomy, brooding personality; soured and savage if you will—nay, as soured and savage as you like, but spiteful never.

Pope became rather by the backing of his friends than from any other cause a party man. Party feeling ran high during the first Georges, and embraced things now outside its ambit—the theatre, for example, and the opera. You remember how excited politicians got over Addison's *Cato*, which, as the work of a Whig, and appearing at a critical time, was thought to be full of a wicked wit and a subtle innuendo future ages have failed to discover amidst its obvious dullness.

Pope, who was not then connected with either party, wrote the prologue, and in one of the best letters ever written to nobody tells the story of the first night.

> The numerous and violent claps of the Whig party, on the one side the theatre, were echoed back by the Tories on the other, while the author sweated behind the scenes with concern to find their applause proceeded more from the hand than the head. This was the case too of the prologue-writer, who was clapped into a stanch Whig, sore against his will, at almost every two lines. I believe that you have heard that, after all the applause of the opposite faction, my Lord Bolingbroke sent for Booth, who played Cato, into the box between one of the acts, and presented him with fifty guineas, in acknowledgment, as he expressed it, for his defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator. The Whigs are unwilling to be distanced this way, as it is said, and, therefore, design a present to the said Cato very speedily. In the meantime they are getting ready as good a sentence as the former on their side. So, betwixt them, it is probable that Cato, as Dr. Garth expressed it, may have something to live upon after he dies.

Later on music was dragged into the fray. The Court was all for Handel and the Germans; the Prince of Wales and the Tory nobility affected the Italian opera. The Whigs went to the Haymarket; the Tories to the Opera House in Lincoln's Inn Field. In this latter strife Pope took no part; for, notwithstanding his *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, he hated music with an entire sincerity. He also affected to hate the drama; but some have thought this accounted for by the fact that, early in his career, he was damned for the farce of *Three Hours After Marriage*, which, after the fashion of our own days, he concocted with another, the co-author in this case being a wit of no less calibre than Gay, the author of *The Beggar's Opera*. The astonished audience bore it as best they might till the last act,

when the two lovers, having first inserted themselves respectively into the skins of a mummy and a crocodile, talk at one another across the boards; then they rose in their rage, and made an end of that farce. Their yells were doubtless still in Pope's ears when, long afterwards, he wrote the fine lines:

> While all its throats the gallery extends,
> And all the thunder of the pit ascends,
> Loud as the wolves on Orca's stormy steep
> Howl to the roarings of the northern deep.

Pope, as we have said, became a partisan, and so had his hands full of ready-made quarrels; but his period was certainly one that demanded a satirist. Perhaps most periods do; but I am content to repeat, his did. Satire like Pope's is essentially modish, and requires a restricted range. Were anyone desirous of satirising humanity at large I should advise him to check his noble rage, and, at all events, to begin with his next-door neighbour, who is almost certain to resent it, which humanity will not do. This was Pope's method. It was a corrupt set amongst whom he moved. The gambling in the South Sea stock had been prodigious, and high and low, married and single, town and country, Protestant and Catholic, Whig and Tory, took part in it. One *could* gamble in that stock. The mania began in February 1720, and by the end of May the price of £100 stock was up to £340. In July and August it was £950, and even touched £1000. In the middle of September it was down to £590, and before the end of the year it had dropped to £125. Pope himself bought stock when it stood so low as £104, but he had

never the courage to sell, and consequently lost, according to his own account, half his worldly possessions. The Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, also bought stock, but he sold—as did His Most Gracious Majesty the King—at £1,000. The age was also a scandalous, ill-living age, and Pope, who was a most confirmed gossip and tale-bearer, picked up all that was going. The details of every lawsuit of a personal character were at his finger-ends. Whoever starved a sister, or forged a will, or saved his candle-ends, made a fortune dishonestly, or lost one disgracefully, or was reported to do so, be he citizen or courtier, noble duke or plump alderman, Mr. Pope was sure to know all about it, and as likely as not to put it into his next satire. Living, as the poet did, within easy distance of London, he always turned up in a crisis as regularly as a porpoise in a storm, so at least writes a noble friend. This sort of thing naturally led to quarrels, and the shocking incompleteness of this lecture stands demonstrated by the fact that, though I have almost done, I have as yet said nothing about Pope's quarrels, which is nearly as bad as writing about St. Paul and leaving out his journeys. Pope's quarrels are celebrated. His quarrel with Mr. Addison, culminating in the celebrated description, almost every line of which is now part and parcel of the English language; his quarrel with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whom he satirised in the most brutal lines ever written by man of woman; his quarrel with Lord Hervey; his quarrel with the celebrated Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, ought not to be dismissed so lightly, but what can I do?

From the Duchess of Marlborough Pope is said to have received a sum of money, sometimes stated at £1000 and sometimes at £3000, for consenting to suppress his description of her as Atossa, which, none the less, he published. I do not believe the story; money passed between the parties and went to Miss Martha Blount, but it must have been for some other consideration. Sarah Jennings was no fool, and loved money far too well to give it away without security, and how possibly could she hope by a cash payment to erase from the tablets of a poet's memory lines dictated by his hate, or bind by the law of honour a man capable of extorting blackmail? Then Pope quarrelled most terribly with the elder Miss Blount, who, he said, used to beat her mother; then he quarrelled with the mother because she persisted in living with the daughter and pretending to be fond of her. As for his quarrels with the whole tribe of poor authors, are they not writ large in the four books of the *Dunciad*? Mr. Swinburne is indeed able to find in some, at all events, of these quarrels a species of holy war, waged, as he says, in language which is at all events strong, "against all the banded bestialities of all dunces and all dastards, all blackguardly blockheads and all blockheaded blackguards."

I am sorry to be unable to allow myself to be wound up in Mr. Swinburne's bucket to the height of his argument. There are two kinds of quarrels, the noble and the ignoble. When John Milton, weary and depressed for a moment in the battle he was fighting in the cause of an enlightened liberty and an instructed freedom, exclaims, with the sad

prophet Jeremy, "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me, a man of strife and contention," we feel the sublimity of the quotation, which would not be quite the case were the words uttered by an Irishman returning home with a broken head from Donnybrook Fair. The *Dunciad* was quite uncalled for. Even supposing that we admit that Pope was not the aggressor,

> The noblest answer unto such
> Is kindly silence when they brawl.

But it is, to say the least of it, doubtful whether Pope did not begin brawling first. Swift, whose misanthropy was genuine, and who begged Pope whenever he thought of the world to give it another lash on his (the Dean's) account, saw clearly the danger of Pope's method, and wrote to him: "Take care the bad poets do not outwit you as they have done the good ones in every age; whom they have provoked to transmit their names to posterity. Mævius is as well known as Virgil, and Gildon will be as well known as you if his name gets into your verses; and as for the difference between good and bad fame, it is a mere trifle." The advice was far too good to be taken. But what has happened? The petty would-be Popes but for the real Pope would have been entirely forgotten. As it is, only their names survive in the index to the *Dunciad*; their indecencies and dastardly blockheadisms are as dead as Queen Anne; and if the historian or the moralist seeks an illustration of the coarseness and brutality of their style, he finds it only too easily, not in the works of the dead dunces, but in the pages of their

persecutor. Pope had none of the grave purpose which makes us, at all events, partially sympathise with Ben Jonson in his quarrels with the poetasters of his day. It is a mere toss-up whose name you may find in the *Dunciad*—a miserable scribbler's or a resplendent scholar's; a tasteless critic's or an immortal wit's. A satirist who places Richard Bentley and Daniel Defoe amongst the dunces must be content to abate his pretensions to be regarded as a social purge.

Men and women, we can well believe, went in terror of little Mr. Pope. Well they might, for he made small concealment of their names, and even such as had the luck to escape obvious recognition have been hoisted into infamy by the untiring labours of subsequent commentators. It may, perhaps, be still open to doubt who was the Florid Youth referred to in the Epilogue to the *Satires*:

> And how did, pray, the Florid Youth offend
> Whose speech you took and gave it to a friend?

Bowles said it was Lord Hervey, and that the adjective is due to his lordship's well-known practice of painting himself; but Mr. Croker, who knew everything, and was in the habit of contradicting the Duke of Wellington about the battle of Waterloo, says, "Certainly not. The Florid Youth was young Henry Fox."

Sometimes, indeed, in our hours of languor and dejection, when

> The heart is sick,
> And all the wheels of being slow,

the question forces itself upon us, What can it matter who the Florid Youth was, and who cares how he offended? But this questioning spirit must

be checked. "The proper study of mankind is man," and that title cannot be denied even to a florid youth. Still, as I was saying, people did not like it at the time, and the then Duke of Argyll said, in his place in the House of Lords, that if anybody so much as named him in an invective, he would first run him through the body, and then throw himself—not out of the window, as one was charitably hoping—but on a much softer place—the consideration of their Lordships' House. Some persons of quality, of less truculent aspect than McCallum More, thought to enlist the poet's services, and the Duchess of Buckingham got him to write an epitaph on her deceased son—a feeble lad—to which transaction the poet is thought to allude in the pleasing lines,

> But random praise—the task can ne'er be done;
> Each mother asks it for her booby son.

Mr. Alderman Barber asked it for himself, and was willing—so at least it was reported—to pay for it at the handsome figure of £4,000 for a single couplet. Pope, however, who was not mercenary, declined to gratify the alderman, who by his will left the poet a legacy of £100, possibly hoping by this benefaction, if he could not be praised in his lifetime, at all events to escape posthumous abuse. If this were his wish it was gratified, and the alderman sleeps unsung.

Pope greatly enjoyed the fear he excited. With something of exultation he sings:

> Yes, I am proud, I must be proud to see
> Men, not afraid of God, afraid of me;
> Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,
> Yet touched and shamed by ridicule alone.

Oh sacred weapon! left for Truth's defence,
Sole dread of folly, vice, and insolence!
To all but heaven-directed hands denied,
The Muse may give thee, but the gods must guide:
Reverent I touch thee, but with honest zeal,
To rouse the watchmen of the public weal,
To Virtue's work provoke the tardy Hall,
And goad the prelate slumb'ring in his stall.
Ye tinsel insects! whom a court maintains,
That counts your beauties only by your stains,
Spin all your cobwebs o'er the eye of day,
The Muse's wing shall brush you all away.
All his grace preaches, all his lordship sings,
All that makes saints of queens, and gods of kings,
All, all but truth drops dead-born from the press,
Like the last gazette, or the last address.

The poet himself was very far from being invulnerable, and he writhed at every sarcasm. There was one of his contemporaries of whom he stood in mortal dread, and yet whose name he was too frightened even to mention. It is easy to guess who this was. It was Hogarth, who in one of his caricatures had depicted Pope as a hunchback, whitewashing Burlington House. Pope deemed this the most grievous insult of his life, but he said nothing about it; the spiteful pencil proving more than master of the poisoned pen.

Pope died on May 30th, 1744, bravely and cheerfully enough. His doctor was offering him one day the usual encouragements, telling him his breath was easier, and so on, when a friend entered, to whom the poet exclaimed, "Here I am, dying of a hundred good symptoms." In Spence's *Anecdotes* there is another story, pitched in a higher key: "Shortly before his death, he said to me, 'What's that?' pointing into the air with a very steady regard, and then looked down on me and said, with a smile of great pleasure, and with the greatest

softness, ' 'Twas a vision.' " It may have been so. At the very last he consented to allow a priest to be sent for, who attended and administered to the dying man the last sacraments of the Church. The spirit in which he received them cannot be pronounced religious. As Cardinal Newman has observed, Pope was an unsatisfactory Catholic.

Pope died in his enemies' day.

Dr. Arbuthnot, who was acknowledged by all his friends to have been the best man who ever lived, be the second-best who he might, had predeceased the poet; and it should be remembered, before we take upon ourselves the task of judging a man we never saw, that Dr. Arbuthnot, who was as shrewd as he was good, had for Pope that warm personal affection we too rarely notice nowadays between men of mature years. Swift said of Arbuthnot, " Oh! if the world had but a dozen Arbuthnots in it I would burn my *Travels*." This may be doubted without damage to the friendly testimony. The terrible Dean himself, whose azure eyes saw through most pretences, loved Pope; but Swift was now worse than dead — he was mad, dying a-top, like the shivered tree he once gazed upon with horror and gloomy forebodings of impending doom.

Many men must have been glad when they read in their scanty journals that Mr. Pope lay dead at his villa in Twickenham. They breathed the easier for the news. Personal satire may be a legitimate, but it is an ugly weapon. The Muse often gives what the gods do not guide; and though we may be willing that our faults should be scourged, we naturally like to be sure that

we owe our sore backs to the blackness of our guilt, and not merely to the fact that we have the proper number of syllables to our names, or because we occasionally dine with an enemy of our scourger.

But living as we do at a convenient distance from Mr. Pope, we may safely wish his days had been prolonged, not necessarily to those of his mother, but to the Psalmist's span, so that he might have witnessed the dawn of a brighter day. 1744 was the nadir of the eighteenth century. With Macbeth the dying Pope might have exclaimed:

> Renown and grace is dead,
> The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
> Is left in the vault to brag of.

The feats of arms that have made the first ministry of the elder Pitt for ever glorious would have appealed to Pope's better nature, and made him forget the scandals of the court and the follies of the town. Who knows but they might have stirred him, for he was not wholly without the true poet's prophetic gift, which dreams of things to come, to foretell, in that animated and animating style of his, which has no rival save glorious John Dryden's, the expansion of England, and how, in far-off summers he should never see, English maidens, living under the Southern Cross, should solace their fluttering hearts before laying themselves down to sleep with some favourite bit from his own *Eloisa to Abelard*? Whether, in fact, maidens in those latitudes do read *Eloisa* before blowing out their candles I cannot say; but Pope, I warrant, would have thought they would. And they might do worse—and better.

Both as a poet and a man Pope had many negations.

> Of love, that sways the sun and all the stars,

he knew absolutely nothing. Even of the lesser light,

> The eternal moon of love,
> Under whose motions life's dull billows move,

he knew but little.

His *Eloisa*, splendid as is its diction, and vigorous though be the portrayal of the miserable creature to whom the poem relates, most certainly lacks "a gracious somewhat," whilst no less certainly is it marred by a most unfeeling coarseness. A poem about love it may be—a love-poem it is not. Of the "wild benefit of nature,"

> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills,

Pope had small notion, though there is just a whiff of Wordsworth in an observation he once hazarded, that a tree is a more poetical object than a prince in his coronation robes. His taste in landscape gardening was honoured with the approbation of Horace Walpole, and he spent £1000 upon a grotto, which incurred the ridicule of Johnson. Of that indescribable something, that "greatness" which causes Dryden to uplift a lofty head from the deep pit of his corruption, neither Pope's character nor his style bears any trace. But still, both as a poet and a man we must give place, and even high place, to Pope. About the poetry there can be no question. A man with his wit, and faculty of expression, and infinite painstaking, is not to be evicted from his ancient homestead in the affections and memories

of his people by a rabble of critics, or even a *posse* of poets. As for the man, he was ever eager and interested in life. Beneath all his faults—for which he had more excuse than a whole congregation of the righteous need ever hope to muster for their own shortcomings—we recognise humanity, and we forgive much to humanity, knowing how much need there is for humanity to forgive us. Indifference, known by its hard heart and its callous temper, is the only unpardonable sin. Pope never committed it. He had much to put up with. We have much to put up with—in him. He has given enormous pleasure to generations of men, and will continue so to do. We can never give him any pleasure. The least we can do is to smile pleasantly as we replace him upon his shelf, and say, as we truthfully may, "There was a great deal of human nature in Alexander Pope."

LORD BOLINGBROKE

1894

THE most accomplished of all our political rascals, Lord Bolingbroke, who once, if the author of *Animated Nature* is to be believed, ran naked through the Park, has, in his otherwise pinchbeck *Reflections in Exile*, one quaint fancy. He suggests that the exile, instead of mourning the deprivation of the society of his friends, should take a pencil (the passage is not before me) and make a list of his acquaintances, and then ask himself which of the number he wants to see at the moment. It is, no doubt, always wise to be particular. Delusion as well as fraud loves to lurk in generalities.

As for this Bolingbroke himself, that he was a consummate scoundrel is now universally admitted; but his mental qualifications, though great, still excite differences of opinion. Even those who are comforted by his style and soothed by the rise and fall of his sentences, are fain to admit that had his classic head been severed from his shoulders a rogue would have met with his deserts. He has been long since stripped of all his fine pretences, and, morally speaking, runs as naked through the pages of history as erst he did (according to Goldsmith) across Hyde Park.

That Bolingbroke had it in him to have been a

great Parliamentarian is certain. He knew "the nature of that assembly," and that "they grow, like hounds, fond of the man who shows them sport, and by whose halloo they are used to be encouraged." Like the rascally lawyer in *Guy Mannering*, Mr. Gilbert Glossin, he could do a good piece of work when so minded. But he was seldom so minded, and failed to come up to the easy standard of his day, and thus brought it about that by his side Sir Robert Walpole appears in the wings and aspect of an angel.

St. John has now nothing to wear but his wit and his style; these still find admirers amongst the judicious.

Mr. Churton Collins, who has written a delightful book about Bolingbroke, and also about Voltaire in England, has a great notion of Bolingbroke's literary merits, and extols them with ardour. He is not likely to be wrong, but, none the less, it is lawful to surround yourself with the seven stately quartos which contain Bolingbroke's works and letters, and ask yourself whether Mr. Collins is right.

Of all Lord Bolingbroke's published writings, none is better than his celebrated *Letter to Wyndham*, recounting his adventures in France, whither he betook himself hastily after Queen Anne's death, and where he joined the Pretender. Here he is not philosophising, but telling a tale, varnished it may be, but sparkling with malice, wit, and humour. Well may Mr. Collins say, "Walpole never produced a more amusing sketch than the picture of the Pretender's Court at Paris and of the Privy Council in the Bois de Boulogne"; but when he proceeds further and adds, "Burke never produced

anything nobler than the passage which commences with the words 'The ocean which environs us is an emblem of our government,'" I am glad to ejaculate, "Indeed he did!"

Here is the passage:

> The ocean which environs us is an emblem of our government, and the pilot and the Minister are in similar circumstances. It seldom happens that either of them can steer a direct course, and they both arrive at their ports by means which frequently seem to carry them from it. But, as the work advances, the conduct of him who leads it on with real abilities clears up, the appearing inconsistencies are reconciled, and, when it is once consummated, the whole shows itself so uniform, so plain, and so natural, that every dabbler in politics will be apt to think he could have done the same. But, on the other hand, a man who proposes no such object, who substitutes artifice in the place of ability, who, instead of leading parties and governing accidents, is eternally agitated backwards and forwards, who begins every day something new and carries nothing on to perfection, may impose a while on the world, but, a little sooner or later, the mystery will be revealed, and nothing will be found to be couched under it but a thread of pitiful expedients, the ultimate end of which never extended farther than living from day to day.

A fine passage, most undoubtedly, and an excellent homily for Ministers. No one but a dabbler in literature will be apt to think he could have done the same—but noble with the nobility of Burke? A noble passage ought to do more for a reader than compel his admiration or win his assent; it should leave him a little better than it found him, with a warmer heart and a more elevated mind.

Mr. Collins also refers with delight to a dissertation on Eloquence, to be found in the *Letter on the Spirit of Patriotism*, and again expresses a doubt whether it would be possible to select anything finer from the pages of Burke.

The passage is too long to be quoted; it begins thus:

> Eloquence has charms to lead mankind, and gives a nobler superiority than power that every dunce may use, or fraud that every knave may employ.

And then follows a good deal about Demosthenes and Cicero, and other talkers of old time.

This may or may not be a fine passage; but if we allow it to be the former, we cannot admit that as it flows it fertilises.

Bolingbroke and Chesterfield are two of the remarkable figures of the first half of the last century. They are both commonly called "great," to distinguish them from other holders of the same titles. Their accomplishments were as endless as their opportunities. They were the most eloquent men of their time, and both possessed that insight into things, that distinction of mind, we call genius. They were ready writers, and have left "works" behind them full of wit and gracious expressions; but neither the one nor the other has succeeded in lodging himself in the general memory. The ill-luck which drove them out of politics has pursued them down the path of letters, though the frequenters of that pleasant track are wisely indifferent to the characters of dead authors who still give pleasure.

No shrewder men ever sat upon a throne than the first two Georges, monarchs of this realm. The second George hated Chesterfield, and called him "a tea-table scoundrel." The phrase sticks. There *is* something petty about this great Lord Chesterfield. The first George, though wholly illiterate, yet took it upon himself to despise

Bolingbroke, philosopher though he was, and dismissed an elaborate effusion of his as "*bagatelles*." Here again the phrase sticks, and not even the beautiful type and lordly margins of Mallet's edition of Lord Bolingbroke's writings, or the stately periods of that nobleman himself, can drive the royal verdict out of my ears. There is nothing real about these writings save their colossal impudence, as when, for example, in his letter on the State of Parties on the accession of George I., he solemnly denies that there was any design during the four last years of Queen Anne's reign to set aside the Hanover succession, and, in support of his denial, quotes himself as a man who, if there had been anything of the sort, must have known of it. By the side of this man the perfidy of Thurlow or of Wedderburn shows white as wool.

By the aid of his own wits and a cunning wife, and assisted by the growing hatred of corruption, Bolingbroke, towards the close of his long life, nearly succeeded in securing some measure of oblivion of his double-dyed treachery. He managed to inflame the "Young England" of the period with his picture of a "Patriot King," and if he had only put into the fire his lucubrations about Christianity he might have accomplished his exit from a world he had made worse for seventy-five years with a show of decency. But he did not do so; the "cur Mallet" was soon ready with his volumes, and then the memory of Bolingbroke was exposed to the obloquy which in this country is (or was) the heritage of the heterodox.

Horace Walpole, who hated Bolingbroke, as he

was in special duty bound to do, felt this keenly. He was glad Bolingbroke was gibbeted, but regretted that he should swing on a wrong count in the indictment.

Writing to Sir Horace Mann, Walpole says:

> You say you have made my Lord Cork give up my Lord Bolingbroke. It is comical to see how he is given up here since the best of his writings, his metaphysical divinity, has been published. While he betrayed and abused every man who trusted him, or who had forgiven him, or to whom he was obliged, he was a hero, a patriot, a philosopher, and the greatest genius of the age; the moment his *Craftsmen* against Moses and St. Paul are published we have discovered he was the worst man and the worst writer in the world. The grand jury have presented his works, and as long as there are any parsons he will be ranked with Tindal and Toland —nay, I don't know whether my father won't become a rubric martyr for having been persecuted by him.

My sympathies are with Walpole, although, when he pronounces Bolingbroke's metaphysical divinity to be the best of his writings, I cannot agree.

Mr. Collins' book is a most excellent one, and if anyone reads it because of my recommendation he will owe me thanks. Mr. Collins values Pope not merely for his poetry, but for his philosophy also, which he cadged from Bolingbroke. The *Essay on Man* is certainly better reading than anything Bolingbroke ever wrote—though what may be the value of its philosophy is a question which may well stand over till after the next General Election, or even longer.

DEAN SWIFT

1894

OF writing books about Dean Swift there is no end. I make no complaint, because I find no fault; I express no wonder, for I feel none. The subject is, and must always remain, one of strange fascination. We have no author like the Dean of St. Patrick's. It has been said of Wordsworth that good luck usually attended those who have written about him. The same thing may be said, with at least equal truth, about Swift. There are a great many books about him, and with few exceptions they are all interesting.

A man who has had his tale told both by Johnson and by Scott ought to be comprehensible. Swift has been, on the whole, lucky with his more recent biographers. Dr. Craik's is a judicious life, Mitford's an admirable sketch, Forster's a valuable fragment; Mr. Leslie Stephen never fails to get to close quarters with his subject. Then there are anecdotes without end—all bubbling with vitality—letters, and journals. And yet, when you have read all that is to be read, what are you to say—what to think?

No fouler pen than Swift's has soiled our literature. His language is horrible from first to last. He is full of odious images, of base and abominable allusions. It would be a labour of Hercules to cleanse his pages. His love-letters are defaced by his incurable coarseness. This habit of his is so

inveterate that it seems a miracle he kept his sermons free from his blackguard phrases. It is a question not of morality, but of decency, whether it is becoming to sit in the same room with the works of this divine. How the good Sir Walter ever managed to see him through the press is amazing. In this matter Swift is inexcusable.

Then his unfeeling temper, his domineering brutality—the tears he drew, the discomfort he occasioned.

Swift, dining at a house, where the part of the tablecloth which was next him happened to have a small hole, tore it as wide as he could, and ate his soup through it; his reason for such behaviour was, as he said, to mortify the lady of the house, and to teach her to pay a proper attention to housewifery.

One is glad to know he sometimes met his match. He slept one night at an inn kept by a widow lady of very respectable family, Mrs. Seneca, of Drogheda. In the morning he made a violent complaint of the sheets being dirty.

"Dirty, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Seneca; "you are the last man, doctor, that should complain of dirty sheets."

And so, indeed, he was, for he had just published the *Lady's Dressing-room*, a very dirty sheet indeed.

Honour to Mrs. Seneca, of Drogheda!

This side of the account needs no vouching; but there is another side.

In 1705 Addison made a present of his book of travels to Dr. Swift, in the blank leaf of which he wrote the following words:

To Dr. Jonathan Swift,
The most agreeable companion,
The truest friend,
And the greatest genius of his age.

Addison was not lavish of epithets. His geese, Ambrose Philips excepted, were geese, not swans. His testimony is not to be shaken—and what a testimony it is!

Then there is Stella's Swift. As for Stella herself, I have never felt I knew enough about her to join very heartily in Thackeray's raptures: "Who has not in his mind an image of Stella? Who does not love her? Fair and tender creature! Pure and affectionate heart! . . . Gentle lady! so lovely, so loving, so unhappy. . . . You are one of the saints of English story." This may be so, but all I feel I know about Stella is, that Swift loved her. That is certain, at all events.

> If this be error, and upon me proved,
> I never writ, and no man ever loved.

The verses to Stella are altogether lovely:

> But, Stella, say what evil tongue
> Reports you are no longer young,
> That Time sits with his scythe to mow
> Where erst sat Cupid with his bow,
> That half your locks are turned to gray?
> I'll ne'er believe a word they say.
> 'Tis true, but let it not be known,
> My eyes are somewhat dimmish grown.

And again:

> Oh! then, whatever Heaven intends,
> Take pity on your pitying friends!
> Nor let your ills affect your mind
> To fancy they can be unkind.
> Me, surely me, you ought to spare
> Who gladly would your suffering share,
> Or give my scrap of life to you
> And think it far beneath your due;
> You, to whose care so oft I owe
> That I'm alive to tell you so.

We are all strangely woven in one piece, as

Shakespeare says. These verses of Swift irresistibly remind their readers of Cowper's lines to Mrs. Unwin.

Swift's prose is famous all the world over. To say anything about it is superfluous. David Hume indeed found fault with it. Hume paid great attention to the English language, and by the time he died had come to write it with much facility and creditable accuracy; but Swift is one of the masters of English prose. But how admirable also is his poetry—easy, yet never slipshod! It lacks one quality only—imagination. There is not a fine phrase, a magical line to be found in it, such as may occasionally be found in—let us say —Butler. Yet, as a whole, Swift is a far more enjoyable poet than Butler.

Swift has unhappily written some abominable verses, which ought never to have been set up in type; but the *Legion Club*, the verses on his own death, *Cadenus and Vanessa*, the *Rhapsody on Poetry*, the tremendous lines on the *Day of Judgment*, and many others, all belong to enjoyable poetry, and can never lose their freshness, their charm, their vitality. Amongst the poets of the eighteenth century Swift sits secure, for he can never go out of fashion.

His hatred of mankind seems genuine; there is nothing *falsetto* about it. He is always in sober, deadly earnest when he abuses his fellow-men. What an odd revenge we have taken! His gospel of hatred, his testament of woe—his *Gulliver*, upon which he expended the treasures of his wit, and into which he instilled the concentrated essence of his rage—has become a child's book, and has been

read with wonder and delight by generations of innocents. After all, it is a kindly place, this planet, and the best use we have for our cynics is to let them amuse the junior portion of our population.

I only know one good-humoured anecdote of Swift; it is very slight, but it is fair to tell it. He dined one day in the company of the Lord Keeper, his son, and their two ladies, with Mr. Cæsar, Treasurer of the Navy, at his house in the City. They happened to talk of Brutus, and Swift said something in his praise, and then, as it were, suddenly recollecting himself, said:

"Mr. Cæsar, I beg your pardon."

One can fancy this occasioning a pleasant ripple of laughter.

There is another story I cannot lay my hands on to verify, but it is to this effect: Faulkner, Swift's Dublin publisher, years after the Dean's death, was dining with some friends, who rallied him upon his odd way of eating some dish—I think, asparagus. He confessed Swift had told him it was the right way; therefore, they laughed the louder, until Faulkner, growing a little angry, exclaimed:

"I tell you what it is, gentlemen: if you had ever dined with the Dean, you would have eaten your asparagus as he bade you."

Truly a wonderful man—imperious, masterful. Yet his state is not kingly like Johnson's—it is tyrannical, sinister, forbidding.

Nobody has brought out more effectively than Mr. Churton Collins[1] Swift's almost ceaseless literary activity. To turn over Scott's nineteen volumes is to get some notion of it. It is not a

[1] *Jonathan Swift*, by J. Churton Collins: Chatto and Windus, 1893.

pleasant task, for Swift was an unclean spirit; but he fascinates and makes the reader long to peep behind the veil, and penetrate the secret of this horrible, yet lovable, because beloved, man. Mr. Collins is rather short with this longing on the part of the reader. He does not believe in any secret; he would have us believe that it is all as plain as a pikestaff. Swift was never mad, and was never married. Stella was a well-regulated damsel, who, though she would have liked very much to have been Mrs. Dean, soon recognised that her friend was not a marrying man, and was, therefore, well content for the rest of her days to share his society with Mrs. Dingley. Vanessa was an ill-regulated damsel, who had not the wit to see that her lover was not a marrying man, and, in the most vulgar fashion possible, thrust herself most inconveniently upon his notice, received a snubbing, took to drink, and died of the spleen. As for the notion that Swift died mad, Mr. Collins conceives himself to get rid of that by reprinting a vague and most inconclusive letter of Dr. Bucknill's. The mystery and the misery of Swift's life have not been got rid of by Mr. Collins. He has left them where he found them—at large. He complains, perhaps justly, that Scott never took the trouble to form any clear impression of Swift's character. Yet we must say that we understand Sir Walter's Swift better than we do Mr. Collins's. Whether the Dean married Stella can never be known. For our part, we think he did not; but to assert positively that no marriage took place, as Mr. Collins does, is to carry dogmatism too far.

A good deal of fault has lately been found with

Thackeray's lecture on Swift. We still think it both delightful and just. The rhapsody about Stella, as I have already hinted, is not to our mind. Rhapsodies about real women are usually out of place. Stella was no saint, but a quick-witted, sharp-tongued hussy, whose fate it was to win the love and pacify the soul of the greatest Englishman of his time—for to call Swift an Irishman is sheer folly. But, apart from this not unnatural slip, what, I wonder, is the matter with Thackeray's lecture, regarded, not as a storehouse of facts, or as an estimate of Swift's writings, but as a sketch of character? Mr. Collins says quite as harsh things about Swift as are to be found in Thackeray's lecture, but he does not attempt, as Thackeray does, to throw a strong light upon this strange and moving figure. It is a hard thing to attempt—failure in such a case is almost inevitable; but I do not think Thackeray did fail. An ounce of mother-wit is often worth a pound of clergy. Insight is not always the child of study. But here, again, the matter should be brought to the test by each reader for himself. Read Thackeray's lecture once again.

What can be happier or truer than his comparison of Swift with a highwayman disappointed of his plunder?

> The great prize has not come yet. The coach with the mitre and crosier in it, which he intends to have for his share, has been delayed on the way from St. James's. The mails wait until nightfall, when his runners come and tell him that the coach has taken a different road and escaped him. So he fires his pistols into the air with a curse, and rides away into his own country.

Thackeray's criticism is severe, but is it not

just? Are we to stand by and hear our nature libelled, and our purest affections beslimed, without a word of protest? "I think I would rather have had a potato and a friendly word from Goldsmith than have been beholden to the Dean for a guinea and a dinner." So would I. But no one of the Dean's numerous critics was more keenly alive than Thackeray both to the majesty and splendour of Swift's genius, and to his occasional flashes of tenderness and love. That amazing person, Lord Jeffrey, in one of his too numerous contributions to the *Edinburgh Review*, wrote of the poverty of Swift's style. Lord Jeffrey was, we hope, a professional critic, not an amateur.

"GULLIVER'S TRAVELS" [1]

1919

CHRISTMAS is once more upon us and finds us worn, wearied, and disillusioned by a great war, and yet here again in the bookshops, meeting the eye, are two new and cheerfully illustrated editions, from London and Philadelphia, of *Gulliver's Travels*, a book now nearly approaching its second century, for the use, behoof and delight of the children of both worlds. Its author takes rank with Arbuthnot and Fielding as the greatest of our ironists; but what greater irony can there be than to discover that Swift's *Travels*, his *Gulliver*, his, to quote a writer I believe to be still living, "gospel of hatred, his testament of woe, upon which he expended the treasures of his wit, and into which he instilled the concentrated essence of his rage," has become a child's book and a suitable Christmas present?

The genesis of *Gulliver*, though the execution was entirely Swift's, arose out of a combination of famous wits, who in 1714 composed the Scribblers' Club, consisting of Swift, Pope, Arbuthnot, Parnell, and Gay as its leading spirits, though, as the late Mr. Aitken tells us in his edition of Arbuthnot's

[1] *Gulliver's Travels.* Edited by Padraic Colum. Presented by Willy Pogány. (Harrap, 296 pp., 7s. 6d.)
Gulliver's Travels: A Voyage to Lilliput. A Voyage to Brobdingnag. With illustrations in colour by Maria L. Kirk. (Lippincott, 221 pp., 6s.)

works (Oxford, 1892), Lord Oxford, Bishop Atterbury, and Congreve were associated with them. One of the designs of the Club, according to Warburton, was to write (Pope, Arbuthnot and Swift combining for that purpose) a satire on the abuses of human learning, and to make it the better received, they proposed to do it in the manner of Cervantes, under the history of some feigned adventures.

Co-operative plans of this kind are seldom carried out, great wits being usually intensely individualistic, and the nearest approach to any common authorship by the members of the Club was the composition of the First Book of the *Memoirs of Scriblerus*, and even this was probably the sole work of Arbuthnot. It does, however, contain in its thirteenth chapter a broad hint of *Gulliver's Travels*. But it is no more than a hint, for if ever there was a book which proceeded solely from the mind and idiosyncrasy of one man, it was "Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World, in Four Parts. By Lemuel Gulliver, first a Surgeon and then a Captain of Several Ships."

During the years 1724–5–6 Swift, as author, worked hard upon his *Travels*. He writes to Pope:

> I have employed my time (beside ditching) in finishing, correcting, amending and transcribing my Travels, in four parts complete, newly augmented and intended for the press when the world shall deserve them, or rather when a printer shall be found brave enough to venture his ears. I like the scheme of our meeting after distresses and dispersions, but the chief end I propose for myself in all my labours is to vex the world rather than divert it, and if I could compass that design without hurting my own person or fortune, I would be the most indefatigable writer you have ever seen.

Swift paid his second visit to London in March

1726, bringing the manuscript of his *Travels* with him to show to Bolingbroke, Pope and Arbuthnot, and to find for it a publisher "brave enough to venture his ears." The three friends were delighted with the manuscript, and a publisher was soon found, Mr. Benjamin Motte, at the Middle Temple Gate.

In November 1726 the book appeared in two volumes, and took the town by storm; but by that time the Dean was back in Dublin, tortured by the illness of Stella, and maddened, when he came to read *Gulliver*, to discover how the cautious publisher, with the fate of Defoe before him, and on the advice of his Reader, "one Took, a Clergyman," had mangled the text. The author of a former famous book had not quite sixty years earlier been much irritated by the caution and delay of another clerical gentleman called Tomkins.[1]

Gulliver, even thus mangled, sold better than *Paradise Lost.* Gay wrote to the author: "The whole impression sold in a week. From the highest to the lowest it is universally read—from the Cabinet Council to the Nursery." Arbuthnot wrote saying that he believed *Gulliver's Travels* would have as great a run as John Bunyan, adding, "Gulliver is a happy man that at his age can write so merry a book." "Happy" and "merry": strange epithets to apply to such a man as Swift and to such a book as *Gulliver's Travels.* But Arbuthnot may have been writing more as a wise and friendly physician than as a critic, searching for *le mot juste.*

We need not wonder that the old Duchess of Marlborough gloated over *Gulliver*, for it fed her

[1] See "Tomkins-Redivivus," *post.*

hatreds, but it is sad to read that Maids of Honour chuckled loudest over those very passages for which buyers of the editions mentioned in the foot-note will look in vain. Modern press-readers are more squeamish than Mr. Took, who probably never conceived the possibility of *Gulliver's Travels* becoming a book for children. And yet we have Gay's word for it that from the first week children seized upon the *Travels*, and marked them for their very own. I suppose we may rely upon this testimony, though Gay was a bachelor. The only money Swift ever made by his writings was £300 for the English edition of *Gulliver*. The Irish booksellers, despite their love for their great Dean, pirated his book without either mercy or shame. Nor did the English newspaper press treat it any better, for it was reprinted in instalments in a weekly newspaper. In France, we are told, "it was read with avidity, and a few weeks after its appearance portions of it were twice dramatised." This was indeed success.

So much for the Christmas of 1726. What about the Christmas of 1919? How does Captain Lemuel Gulliver stand to-day?

A clear note of difference is discernible among the critics. I give a few excerpts from the late Mr. Churton Collins:

> It has no moral, no social, no philosophical purpose. It was the mere ebullition of cynicism and misanthropy. A savage *jeu d'esprit*. And as such wise men will regard it. But there have never been wanting critics to place it on a much higher footing;

and Mr. Collins quotes Hazlitt, who declared that *Gulliver* was an "attempt to tear off the mask of

imposture from the world, and that nothing but imposture had a right to complain of it." Mr. Collins, after seeking to upset Hazlitt, proceeds:

> At no period distinguished by generosity of sentiment, by humanity, by decency, could such satire have been universally applauded. Yet so it was. The men and women of those times appear to have seen nothing objectionable in an apologue which would scarcely have passed without protest in the Rome of Petronius. (*Jonathan Swift*, by John Churton Collins, Chatto and Windus, 1893, pp. 208, 213.)

Mr. Gerald Moriarty affirms that "in the records of misanthropy, *Gulliver's Travels* stands for all time supreme and unapproachable."

Mr. Thackeray's estimate is well known. Sir Walter Scott was content to say:

> Severe, unjust and degrading as this satire is, it was hailed with malignant triumph by those whose disappointed hopes had thrown them into the same state of gloomy misanthropy which it argues in its author.

But younger critics may now be found who take Hazlitt's view and think more nobly of *Gulliver's Travels*. Mr. Charles Whibley, for example, has an easy task in disposing of the calumny that Swift was a misanthrope who hated all mankind, for he was not only one of the most practically benevolent of men, but the best-loved of all authors of equal fame. And as for his cynicism, Mr. Whibley declares:

> The heart that was torn by *sæva indignatio*, to use a phrase from the epitaph he composed for himself, was no cynic's heart. The truth is he was a born idealist, with no desire either to snarl or smile at life. The master passion of his mind was anger against injustice and oppression . . . He hated injustice and dishonour wherever he saw them. . . . Why, then, should Swift have been thus monstrously misunderstood? Why should he be pursued after death by a kind of personal venom? I think for the very reason that he was no cynic. He could not regard leniently the folly of those about him. He did not write for his own pleasure, or to put money in

his own pocket. He wrote in scorn of stupidity, or with a fixed desire to reform abuses. He does not temper the wind of his wrath to his shorn victims. He does not bring an easy message of perfectibility to a sanguine world. He is ever cruel in his denunciation of abuses, and those who regard literature as an anodyne do not like cruelty. But let it be remembered that Swift's cruelty was always justified. (*Swift*, by Charles Whibley, Cambridge, 1917.)

This is well said.

Forty years ago I took home with me the nineteen volumes of Scott's edition of Swift, and if I know the contents of any books, I know the contents of these, now battered, tomes, and I confess that from time to time, under the influence of different passages and poems, I have " wobbled " in my opinion about the inherent disposition and frame of mind of this famous man. At the present hour I incline to Mr. Whibley's estimate of *Gulliver* rather than to Mr. Collins's.

There however the book is, and there it will remain. New editions of the *Travels* will appear for the next two hundred years at Yule-tide!

In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for October 1782 there is a character of Dean Swift, " From the MSS. of a Gentleman lately deceased in Dublin," which concludes thus:

From the whole survey of the man I am inclined to think that, like Rembrandt's figures, he would have been lost in the shadows of his character, if the strength of the lights had not relieved him.

The best thing worth having would be the opinion of those children in Great Britain and America who will read for the first time their *Gulliver's Travels* in these two new editions. I wish such unbiassed testimony could be first obtained and then preserved for another two hundred years.

JOHN GAY

1894

THE first half of the eighteenth century was in England the poets' playground. These rhyming gentry had then a status, a claim upon private munificence and the public purse which has long since been hopelessly barred. A measure of wit, a tincture of taste, and a perseverance in demand would in those days secure for the puling Muse slices of solid pudding whilst in the flesh, and (frequently) sepulture in the Abbey when all was over.

What silk-mercer's apprentice in these hard times, finding a place behind Messrs. Marshall and Snelgrove's counter not jumping with his genius, dare hope by the easy expedient of publishing a pamphlet on *The Present State of Wit* to become domestic steward to a semi-royal Duchess, and the friend of Mr. Lewis Morris and Mr. Lecky, who are, I suppose, our nineteenth-century equivalents for Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift? Yet such was the happy fate of Gay, who, after an idle life of undeserved good-fortune and much unmanly repining, died of an inflammation, in spite of the skilled care of Arbuthnot and the unwearying solicitude of the Duchess of Queensberry, and was interred like a peer of the realm in Westminster Abbey, having for his pall-bearers the Earl of Chesterfield, Viscount Cornbury, the Hon. Mr. Berkeley, General Dormer, Mr. Gore, and Mr.

Pope. Such a recognition of the author of *Fables* and *The Beggar's Opera* must make Mr. Besant's mouth water. Nor did Gay, despite heavy losses in the South Sea Company, die a pauper; he left £6000 behind him, which, as he was wise enough to die intestate, was divided equally between his two surviving sisters.

Gay's good luck has never forsaken him. He enjoys, if, indeed, the word be not the hollowest of mockeries, an eternity of fame. It is true he is not read much, but he is always read a little. He has been dead more than a century and a half, so it seems likely that a hundred and fifty years hence he will be read as much as he is now, and, like a cork, will be observed bobbing on the surface of men's memories. Better men and better poets than he have been, and will be, entirely submerged; but he was happy in his hour, happy even in his name (which lent itself to rhyme), happy in his nature; and so (such at least is our prognostication) new editions of Gay's slender remains will at long intervals continue to appear and to attract a moment's attention, even as Mr. Underhill's admirable edition of the poems has lately done; new anthologies will contain his name, the biographical dictionaries will never quite forget him, his tomb in the Abbey will be stared at by impressionable youngsters, Pope's striking epitaph will invite the fault-finding of the critical, and his own jesting couplet incur the censure of the moralist, until the day dawns when men cease to forget themselves in trifles. As soon as they do this, Gay will be forgotten once and for ever.

Gay's one real achievement was *The Beggar's*

Opera, which sprang from a sprout of Swift's great brain. A "Newgate pastoral might make an odd, pretty sort of thing," so the Dean once remarked to Gay; and as Mr. Underhill, in his admirable Life of our poet, reminds us, Swift repeated the suggestion in a letter to Pope: "What think you of a Newgate pastoral among the whores and thieves there?" But Swift's *Beggar's Opera* would not have hit the public taste between wind and water as did Gay's. It would have been much too tremendous a thing—its sincerity would have damned it past redemption. Even in Gay's light hands the thing was risky—a speculation in the public fancy which could not but be dangerous. Gay knew this well enough, hence his quotation from Martial (afterwards adopted by the Tennysons as the motto for *Poems by Two Brothers*), *Nos hæc novimus esse nihil.* Congreve, resting on his laurels, declared it would either take greatly, or be damned confoundedly. It took, and, indeed, we cannot wonder. There was a foretaste of Gilbert about it quite enough to make its fortune in any century. Furthermore, it drove out of England, so writes an early editor, "for that season, the Italian opera, which had carried all before it for several years." It was a triumph for the home-bred article, and therefore dear to the souls of all true patriots.

The piece, though as wholly without sincerity as a pastoral by Ambrose Philips, a thing merely of the footlights, entirely shorn of a single one of the rays which glorify lawlessness in Burns's *Jolly Beggars*, yet manages through the medium of the songs to convey a pleasing though absurd senti-

mentality; and there is, perhaps, noticeable throughout a slight—a very slight—flavour of what is curtly but conveniently called "the Revolution," which imparts a slender interest.

The Beggar's Opera startled the propriety of that strange institution, the Church of England—a seminary of true religion which had left the task of protesting against the foulness of Dryden and Wycherley and the unscrupulous wit of Congreve and Vanbrugh to the hands of non-jurors like Collier and Law, but which, speaking, we suppose, in the interests of property, raised a warning voice when a comic opera made fun, not of marriage vows, but of highway robbery. Dr. Herring,[1] afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, plucked up courage to preach against *The Beggar's Opera* before the Court, but the Head of the Church paid no attention to the divine, and, with the Queen and all the princesses, attended the twenty-first representation. The piece brought good luck all round. "Everybody," so Mr. Underhill assures us, "connected with the theatre (Lincoln's Inn Fields), from the principal performer down to the box-keepers, got a benefit," and Miss Lavinia Fenton, who played Polly Peachum, lived to become Duchess of Bolton; whilst Hogarth painted no less than three pictures of the celebrated scene, "How happy could I be with either—were t'other dear charmer away."

Dr. Johnson, in his *Life of Gay*, deals scornfully with the absurd notion that robbers were multiplied by the popularity of *The Beggar's Opera*.

[1] Known after 1745 as "Red Herring," he having raised a regiment of "red females" against the Jacobites.

"It is not likely to do good," says the Doctor, "nor can it be conceived, without more speculation than life requires or admits, to be productive of much evil." The Church of England might as well have held its tongue.

Gay, flushed with success, was not long in producing a sequel called *Polly*, which, however, as it was supposed to offend, not against morality, which it undoubtedly did, but against Sir Robert Walpole, was prohibited. *Polly* was printed, and, being prohibited, had a great sale. It is an exceedingly nasty piece, not unworthy of one of the three authors who between them produced that stupidest of farces, *Three Hours after Marriage*.

Gay's third opera, *Achilles*, was produced at Covent Garden after his death. One does not need to be a classical purist to be offended at the sight of Achilles upon a stage, singing doggerel verses to the tune of "Butter'd Pease," or at hearing Ajax exclaim:

> Honour called me to the task,
> No matter for explaining,
> 'Tis a fresh affront to ask
> A man of honour's meaning.

This vulgar and idiotic stuff ran twenty nights.

Gay's best-known poetical pieces are his *Fables*, and his undoubtedly interesting, though intrinsically dull *Trivia: or The Art of Walking the Streets of London*, though for our own part we would as lief read his *Shepherds' Week* as anything else Gay has ever written.

The *Fables* are light and lively, and might safely be recommended to all who are fond of an easy quotation. To lay them down is never difficult,

and if, after having done so, Swift's *Confession of the Beasts* is taken up, how vast the difference! There are, we know, those in whose nature there is too much of the milk of human kindness to enable them to enjoy Swift when he shows his teeth; but however this may be, we confess, if we are to read at all, we must prefer Swift's *Beasts' Confession* to all the sixty-five fables of Gay put together.

> The Swine with contrite heart allow'd
> His shape and beauty made him proud;
> In diet was perhaps too nice,
> But gluttony was ne'er his vice;
> In every turn of life content
> And meekly took what fortune sent.
> Inquire through all the parish round,
> A better neighbour ne'er was found.
> His vigilance might some displease;
> 'Tis true he hated sloth like pease.
>
> The Chaplain vows he cannot fawn,
> Though it would raise him to the lawn.
> He passed his hours among his books,
> You find it in his meagre looks.
> He might if he were worldly wise
> Preferment get and spare his eyes;
> But owns he has a stubborn spirit
> That made him trust alone to merit;
> Would rise by merit to promotion.
> Alas! a mere chimeric notion.

Gay was found pleasing by his friends, and had, we must believe, a kind heart. Swift, who was a nice observer in such matters, in his famous poem on his own death, assigns Gay a week in which to grieve:

> Poor Pope would grieve a month, and Gay
> A week, and Arbuthnot a day;
> St. John himself will scarce forbear
> To bite his pen and drop a tear;
> The rest will give a shrug and cry,
> "I'm sorry, but we all must die."

It is a matter of notoriety that Gay was very fat and fond of eating. He is, as we have already said, buried in Westminster Abbey, over against Chaucer. When all the rubbish is carted away from the Abbey to make room for the great men and women of the twentieth century, Gay will probably be accounted just good enough to remain where he is. He always was a lucky fellow, though he had not the grace to think so.

SIR JOHN VANBRUGH

1894

JEREMY COLLIER begins his famous and witty, though dreadfully overdone, *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* with the following spirited words:

> The business of Plays is to recommend Virtue and discountenance Vice; to show the Uncertainty of Human Greatness, the sudden turns of Fate, and the unhappy conclusions of Violence and Injustice; 'tis to expose the singularities of Pride and Fancy, to make Folly and Falsehood contemptible, and to bring everything that is ill under Infamy and Neglect.

He then adds: "This design has been oddly pursued by the English Stage"; and so he launches his case.

Sir John Vanbrugh, who fared very badly at the doctor's hands, replied—and, on the whole, with great spirit and considerable success—in a pamphlet entitled *A Short Vindication of "The Relapse" and "The Provok'd Wife" from Immorality and Profaneness.* In this reply he strikes out this bold apophthegm:

> The business of Comedy is to show people what they should do, by representing them upon the stage, doing what they should not.

He continues with much good sense:

> Nor is there any necessity that a philosopher should stand by, like an interpreter at a puppet-show, to explain the moral to the audience. The mystery is seldom so deep but the pit and boxes can dive into it, and 'tis their example out of

the playhouse that chiefly influences the galleries. The stage is a glass for the world to view itself in; people ought, therefore, to see themselves as they are; if it makes their faces too fair, they won't know they are dirty, and, by consequence, will neglect to wash them. If, therefore, I have showed "Constant" upon the stage what generally the thing called a fine gentleman is off it, I think I have done what I should do. I have laid open his vices as well as his virtues; 'tis the business of the audience to observe where his flaws lessen his value, and, by considering the deformity of his blemishes, become sensible how much a finer thing he would be without them.

It is impossible to improve upon these instructions; they are admirable. The only pity is that, as, naturally enough, Sir John wrote his plays first, and defended them afterwards, he had not bestowed a thought upon the subject until the angry parson gave him check. Vanbrugh, like most dramatists of his calibre, wrote to please the town, without any thought of doing good or harm. The two things he wanted were money and a reputation for wit. To lecture and scold him as if he had degraded some high and holy office was ridiculous. Collier had an excellent case, for there can be no doubt that the dramatists he squinted at were worse than they had any need to be. But it is impossible to read Collier's two small books without a good many pishes and pshaws! He was a clericalist of an aggressive type. You cannot withhold your sympathy from Vanbrugh's remark:

The reader may here be pleased to take notice what this gentleman would construe profaneness if he were once in the saddle with a good pair of spurs upon his heels.

Now that Evangelicalism has gone out of fashion, we no longer hear denunciations of stage-plays. High Church parsons crowd the Lyceum, and lead the laughter in less dignified if more amusing

resorts. But, for all that, there is a case to be made against the cheerful playhouse, but not by me.

As for Sir John Vanbrugh, his two well-known plays, *The Relapse* and *The Provok'd Wife*, are most excellent reading, Jeremy Collier notwithstanding. They must be read with the easy tolerance, the amused benignity, the scornful philosophy of a Christian of the Dr. Johnson type. You must not probe your laughter deep; you must forget for awhile your probationary state, and remember that, after all, the thing is but a play. Sir John has a great deal of wit of that genuine kind which is free from modishness. He reads freshly. He also has ideas. In *The Provok'd Wife*, which was acted for the first time in the early part of 1697, there appears the Philosophy of Clothes (thus forestalling Swift), and also an early conception of Carlyle's stupendous image of a naked House of Lords. This occurs in a conversation between Heartfree and Constant, which concludes thus:

Heartfree. Then for her outside—I consider it merely as an outside—she has a thin, tiffany covering over just such stuff as you and I are made on. As for her motion, her mien, her air, and all those tricks, I know they affect you mightily. If you should see your mistress at a coronation, dragging her peacock's train, with all her state and insolence about her, 'twould strike you with all the awful thoughts that heaven itself could pretend to from you; whereas I turn the whole matter into a jest, and suppose her strutting in the selfsame stately manner, with nothing on her but her stays and her under, scanty-quilted petticoat.

Constant. Hold thy profane tongue! for I'll hear no more.

The Relapse must, I think, be pronounced Vanbrugh's best comedy. Lord Foppington is a humorous conception, and the whole dialogue is

animated and to the point. One sees where Sheridan got his style. There are more brains, if less sparkle, in Vanbrugh's repartees than in Sheridan's.

Berinthia. I have had so much discourse with her, that I believe, were she once cured of her fondness to her husband, the fortress of her virtue would not be so impregnable as she fancies.

Worthy. What! she runs, I'll warrant you, into that common mistake of fond wives, who conclude themselves virtuous because they can refuse a man they don't like when they have got one they do.

Berinthia. True; and, therefore, I think 'tis a presumptuous thing in a woman to assume the name of virtuous till she has heartily hated her husband and been soundly in love with somebody else.

A handsome edition of Vanbrugh's Plays has recently appeared, edited by Mr. W. C. Ward (Lawrence and Bullen), who has prepared an excellent Life of his author.

Vanbrugh was, as all the world knows, the architect of Blenheim Palace, as he also was of Castle Howard. He became Comptroller of Works in the reign of Queen Anne, and was appointed by King George Surveyor of the Works at Greenwich Hospital, in the neighbourhood of which he had property of his own. His name is still familiar in the ears of the respectable inhabitants of Blackheath. But what is mysterious is how and where he acquired such skill as he possessed in his profession. His father, Giles Vanbrugh, had nineteen children, of whom thirteen appear to have lived for some length of time, and of John's education nothing precise is known. When nineteen he went into France, where he remained some years.

During this period, observes Mr. Ward, "it may be presumed he laid the foundation of that skill in

architecture he afterwards so eminently displayed; at least, there is no subsequent period of his life to which we can, with equal probability, ascribe his studies in that art."

Later on, Mr. Ward says:

> The year 1702 presents our author in a new character. Of his architectural studies we know absolutely nothing, unless we may accept Swift's account, who pretends that Vanbrugh acquired the rudiments of the art by watching children building houses of cards or clay. But this was probably ironical. However he came by his skill, in 1702 he stepped into sudden fame as the architect of Castle Howard.

It is indeed extraordinary that a man should have undertaken such big jobs as Castle Howard and Blenheim without leaving any trace whatever of the means by which he became credited with the power to execute them. Mr. Pecksniff got an occasional pupil and premium, but, so far as I know, he never designed so much as a parish pump. Blenheim is exposed to a good deal of criticism, but nobody can afford to despise either it or Castle Howard, and it seems certain that the original plans and elevations of both structures were prepared by the author of *The Relapse* and *The Provok'd Wife* himself. Of course, there may have been a ghost, but if there had been, the Duchess of Marlborough, who was soon at loggerheads with her architect, would probably have dragged it into the light of day.

The wits made great fun of their distinguished colleague's feats in brick and mortar. It was not usually permissible for a literary gentleman to be anything else, unless, indeed, a divine like Dr. Swift, whose satirical verses on the small house Vanbrugh built for himself in Whitehall are well

known. They led to a coolness, and no one need wonder. After the architect's death the divine apologised and expressed regret.

The well-known epigram—

> Under this stone, reader, survey
> Dead Sir John Vanbrugh's house of clay:
> Lie heavy on him, Earth, for he
> Laid many heavy loads on thee—

is the composition of another doctor of divinity —Dr. Abel Evans—and was probably prompted by envy.

Amongst other things, Vanbrugh was a Herald, and in that capacity visited Hanover in 1706, and helped to invest the Electoral Prince, afterwards George II., with the Order of the Garter. Vanbrugh's personality is not clearly revealed to us anywhere, but he appears to have been a pleasant companion and witty talker. He married late in life, and of three children only one survived, to be killed at Fontenoy. He himself died in 1726, in his sixty-third year, of a quinsy. His widow survived him half a century, thus affording another proof, if proof be needed, that no man is indispensable.

DR. JOHNSON

1887

IF we should ever take occasion to say of Dr. Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare what he himself said of a similar production of the poet Rowe, "that it does not discover much profundity or penetration," we ought in common fairness always to add that nobody else has ever written about Shakespeare one-half so entertainingly. If this statement be questioned, let the doubter, before reviling me, re-read the preface, and if, after he has done so, he still demurs, we shall be content to withdraw the observation, which, indeed, has only been made for the purpose of introducing a quotation from the preface itself.

In that document, Dr. Johnson, with his unrivalled stateliness, writes as follows: "The poet of whose works I have undertaken the revision may now begin to assume the dignity of an ancient, and claim the privilege of established fame and prescriptive veneration. He has long outlived his century, the term commonly fixed as the test of literary merit."

The whirligig of time has brought in his revenges. The Doctor himself has been dead his century. He died on the 13th of December, 1784. Come, let us criticise him.

Our qualifications for this high office need not be investigated curiously.

"Criticism," writes Johnson in the 60th *Idler*, "is a study by which men grow important and formidable at a very small expense. The power of invention has been conferred by nature upon few, and the labour of learning those sciences which may by mere labour be obtained, is too great to be willingly endured; but every man can exert such judgment as he has upon the works of others; and he whom nature has made weak, and idleness keeps ignorant, may yet support his vanity by the name of a critick."

To proceed with our task by the method of comparison is to pursue a course open to grave objection, yet it is forced upon us when we find, as we lately did, a writer in the *Times* newspaper, in the course of a not very discriminating review of Mr. Froude's recent volumes, casually remarking, as if it admitted of no more doubt than the day's price of consols, that Carlyle was a greater man than Johnson. It is a good thing to be positive. To be positive in your opinions and selfish in your habits is the best recipe, if not for happiness, at all events for that far more attainable commodity, comfort, with which we are acquainted. "A noisy man," sang poor Cowper, who could not bear anything louder than the hissing of a tea-urn, "a noisy man is always in the right," and a positive man can seldom be proved wrong. Still, in literature it is very desirable to preserve a moderate measure of independence, and we, therefore, make bold to ask whether it is as plain as the "old hill of Howth," that Carlyle was a greater man than Johnson? Is not the precise contrary the truth? No abuse of Carlyle need be looked for here or

from me. When a man of genius and of letters happens to have any striking virtues, such as purity, temperance, honesty, the novel task of dwelling on them has such attraction for us, that we are content to leave the elucidation of his faults to his personal friends, and to stern, unbending moralists like Mr. Edmund Yates and the *World* newspaper.[1] To love Carlyle is, thanks to Mr. Froude's superhuman ideal of friendship, a task of much heroism, almost meriting a pension; still it is quite possible for the candid and truth-loving soul. But a greater than Johnson he most certainly was not.

There is a story in Boswell of an ancient beggar-woman who, whilst asking an alms of the Doctor, described herself to him, in a lucky moment for her pocket, as "an old struggler." Johnson, his biographer tells us, was visibly affected. The phrase stuck to his memory, and was frequently applied to himself. "I too," so he would say, "am an old struggler." So too, in all conscience, was Carlyle. The struggles of Johnson have long been historical; those of Carlyle have just become so. We are interested in both. To be indifferent would be inhuman. Both men had great endowments, tempestuous natures, hard lots. They were not amongst Dame Fortune's favourites. They had to fight their way. What they took they took by storm. But—and here is a difference indeed — Johnson came off victorious, Carlyle did not.

Boswell's book is an arch of triumph, through

[1] "The late Mr. Carlyle was a brute and a boor."—*The World*, October 29th, 1884.

which, as we read, we see his hero passing into eternal fame, to take up his place with those

> Dead but sceptred sovereigns who still rule
> Our spirits from their urns.

Froude's book is a tomb over which the lovers of Carlyle's genius will never cease to shed tender but regretful tears.

We doubt whether there is in English literature a more triumphant book than Boswell's. What materials for tragedy are wanting? Johnson was a man of strong passions, unbending spirit, violent temper, as poor as a church-mouse, and as proud as the proudest of Church dignitaries; endowed with the strength of a coal-heaver, the courage of a lion, and the tongue of Dean Swift, he could knock down booksellers and silence bargees; he was melancholy almost to madness, "radically wretched," indolent, blinded, diseased. Poverty was long his portion; not that genteel poverty that is sometimes behindhand with its rent, but that hungry poverty that does not know where to look for its dinner. Against all these things had this "old struggler" to contend; over all these things did this "old struggler" prevail. Over even the fear of death, the giving up of this "intellectual being," which had haunted his gloomy fancy for a lifetime, he seems finally to have prevailed, and to have met his end as a brave man should.

Carlyle, writing to his wife, says, and truthfully enough, "The more the devil worries me the more I wring him by the nose"; but then if the devil's was the only nose that was wrung in the transac-

tion, why need Carlyle cry out so loud? After buffeting one's way through the storm-tossed pages of Froude's *Carlyle*—in which the universe is stretched upon the rack because food disagrees with man and cocks crow—with what thankfulness and reverence do we read once again the letter in which Johnson tells Mrs. Thrale how he has been called to endure, not dyspepsia or sleeplessness, but paralysis itself:

On Monday I sat for my picture, and walked a considerable way with little inconvenience. In the afternoon and evening I felt myself light and easy, and began to plan schemes of life. Thus I went to bed, and, in a short time, waked and sat up, as has long been my custom; when I felt a confusion in my head which lasted, I suppose, about half a minute; I was alarmed, and prayed God that however much He might afflict my body He would spare my understanding. . . . Soon after I perceived that I had suffered a paralytic stroke, and that my speech was taken from me. I had no pain, and so little dejection, in this dreadful state, that I wondered at my own apathy, and considered that perhaps death itself, when it should come, would excite less horror than seems now to attend it. In order to rouse the vocal organs I took two drams. . . . I then went to bed, and, strange as it may seem, I think, slept. When I saw light it was time I should contrive what I should do. Though God stopped my speech, He left me my hand. I enjoyed a mercy which was not granted to my dear friend Lawrence, who now perhaps overlooks me, as I am writing, and rejoices that I have what he wanted. My first note was necessarily to my servant, who came in talking, and could not immediately comprehend why he should read what I put into his hands. . . . How this will be received by you I know not. I hope you will sympathise with me; but perhaps

> "My mistress, gracious, mild, and good,
> Cries—Is he dumb? 'Tis time he shou'd."

I suppose you may wish to know how my disease is treated by the physicians. They put a blister upon my back, and two from my ear to my throat, one on a side. The blister on the back has done little, and those on the throat have not risen. I bullied and bounced (it sticks to our last sand), and compelled the apothecary to make his salve according to the Edinburgh dispensatory, that it might adhere better. I have

now two on my own prescription. They likewise give me salt of hartshorn, which I take with no great confidence; but I am satisfied that what can be done is done for me. I am almost ashamed of this querulous letter, but now it is written let it go.

This is indeed tonic and bark for the mind.

If, irritated by a comparison that ought never to have been thrust upon us, we ask why it is that the reader of Boswell finds it as hard to help loving Johnson as the reader of Froude finds it hard to avoid disliking Carlyle, the answer must be that whilst the elder man of letters was full to overflowing with the milk of human kindness, the younger one was full to overflowing with something not nearly so nice; and that whilst Johnson was pre-eminently a reasonable man, reasonable in all his demands and expectations, Carlyle was the most unreasonable mortal that ever exhausted the patience of nurse, mother, or wife.

Of Dr. Johnson's affectionate nature nobody has written with nobler appreciation than Carlyle himself. "Perhaps it is this Divine feeling of affection, throughout manifested, that principally attracts us to Johnson. A true brother of men is he, and filial lover of the earth."

The day will come when it will be recognised that Carlyle, as a critic, is to be judged by what he himself corrected for the press, and not by splenetic entries in diaries, or whimsical extravagances in private conversation.

Of Johnson's reasonableness nothing need be said, except that it is patent everywhere. His wife's judgment was a sound one—"He is the most sensible man I ever met."

As for his brutality, of which at one time we

used to hear a great deal, we cannot say of it what Hookham Frere said of Landor's immorality, that it was

> Mere imaginary classicality
> Wholly devoid of criminal reality.

It was nothing of the sort. Dialectically the great Doctor was a great brute. The fact is he had so accustomed himself to wordy warfare, that he lost all sense of moral responsibility, and cared as little for men's feelings as a Napoleon did for their lives. When the battle was over, the Doctor frequently did what no soldier ever did that I have heard tell of, apologised to his victims and drank wine or lemonade with them. It must also be remembered that for the most part his victims sought him out. They came to be tossed and gored. And after all, are they so much to be pitied? They have our sympathy, and the Doctor has our applause. I am not prepared to say, with the simpering fellow with weak legs whom David Copperfield met at Mr. Waterbrook's dinner table, that I would sooner be knocked down by a man with blood than picked up by a man without any; but, argumentatively speaking, I think it would be better for a man's reputation to be knocked down by Dr. Johnson than picked up by Mr. Froude.

Johnson's claim to be the best of our talkers cannot, on our present materials, be contested. For the most part we have only talk about other talkers. Johnson's is matter of record. Carlyle no doubt was a great talker—no man talked against talk or broke silence to praise it more eloquently than he, but unfortunately none of it is in evidence. All that is given us is a sort of Commination Service

writ large. We soon weary of it. Man does not live by curses alone.

An unhappier prediction of a boy's future was surely never made than that of Johnson's by his cousin, Mr. Cornelius Ford, who said to the infant Samuel, "You will make your way the more easily in the world as you are content to dispute no man's claim to conversation excellence, and they will, therefore, more willingly allow your pretensions as a writer." Unfortunate Mr. Ford! The man never breathed whose claim to conversation excellence Dr. Johnson did not dispute on every possible occasion, whilst, just because he was admittedly so good a talker, his pretensions as a writer have been occasionally slighted.

Johnson's personal character has generally been allowed to stand high. It, however, has not been submitted to recent tests. To be the first to "smell a fault" is the pride of the modern biographer. Boswell's artless pages afford useful hints not lightly to be disregarded. During some portion of Johnson's married life he had lodgings, first at Greenwich, afterwards at Hampstead. But he did not always go home o' nights; sometimes preferring to roam the streets with that vulgar ruffian Savage, who was certainly no fit company for him. He once actually quarrelled with "Tetty," who, despite her ridiculous name, was a very sensible woman with a very sharp tongue, and for a season, like stars, they dwelt apart. Of the real merits of this dispute we must resign ourselves to ignorance. The materials for its discussion do not exist; even Croker could not find them. Neither was our great moralist as sound as one would have

liked to see him in the matter of the payment of small debts. When he came to die, he remembered several of these outstanding accounts; but what assurance have we that he remembered them all? One sum of £10 he sent across to the honest fellow from whom he had borrowed it, with an apology for his delay; which, since it had extended over a period of twenty years, was not superfluous. I wonder whether he ever repaid Mr. Dilly the guinea he once borrowed of him to give to a very small boy who had just been apprenticed to a printer. If he did not, it was a great shame. That he was indebted to Sir Joshua in a small loan is apparent from the fact that it was one of his three dying requests to that great man that he should release him from it, as, of course, the most amiable of painters did. The other two requests, it will be remembered, were to read his Bible, and not to use his brush on Sundays. The good Sir Joshua gave the desired promises with a full heart, for these two great men loved one another; but subsequently discovered the Sabbatical restriction not a little irksome, and after a while resumed his former practice, arguing with himself that the Doctor really had no business to extract any such promise. The point is a nice one, and perhaps ere this the two friends have met and discussed it in the Elysian fields. If so, I hope the Doctor, grown "angelical," kept his temper with the mild shade of Reynolds better than on the historical occasion when he discussed with him the question of "strong drinks."

Against Garrick, Johnson undoubtedly cherished a smouldering grudge, which, however, he never allowed anyone but himself to fan into flame. His

pique was natural. Garrick had been his pupil at Edial, near Lichfield; they had come up to town together with an easy united fortune of fourpence —"current coin o' the realm." Garrick soon had the world at his feet and garnered golden grain. Johnson became famous too, but remained poor and dingy. Garrick surrounded himself with what only money can buy, good pictures and rare books. Johnson cared nothing for pictures—how should he? he could not see them; but he did care a great deal about books, and the pernickety little player was chary about lending his splendidly bound rarities to his quondam preceptor. Our sympathies in this matter are entirely with Garrick; Johnson was one of the best men that ever lived, but not to lend books to. Like Lady Slattern, he had a "most observant thumb." But Garrick had no real cause for complaint. Johnson may have soiled his folios and sneered at his trade, but in life Johnson loved Garrick, and in death embalmed his memory in a sentence which can only die with the English language: "I am disappointed by that stroke of death which has eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure."

Will it be believed that puny critics have been found to quarrel with this colossal compliment on the poor pretext of its falsehood? Garrick's death, urge these dullards, could not possibly have eclipsed the gaiety of nations, since he had retired from the stage months previous to his demise. When will mankind learn that literature is one thing, and sworn testimony another?

Johnson's relations with Burke were of a more

crucial character. The author of *Rasselas* and *The English Dictionary* can never have been really jealous of Garrick, or in the very least desirous of "bringing down the house"; but Burke had done nobler things than that. He had made politics philosophical, and had at least tried to cleanse them from the dust and cobwebs of party. Johnson, though he had never sat in the House of Commons, had yet, in his capacity of an unauthorised reporter, put into the mouths of honourable members much better speeches than ever came out of them, and it is no secret that he would have liked to make a speech or two on his own account. Burke had made many. Harder still to bear, there were not wanting good judges to say that, in their opinion, Burke was a better talker than the great Samuel himself. To cap it all, was not Burke a "vile Whig"? The ordeal was an unusually trying one. Johnson emerges triumphant.

Though by no means disposed to hear men made much of, he always listened to praise of Burke with a boyish delight. He never wearied of it. When any new proof of Burke's intellectual prowess was brought to his notice, he would exclaim exultingly, "Did we not always say he was a great man?" And yet how admirably did this "poor scholar" preserve his independence and equanimity of mind! It was not easy to dazzle the Doctor. What a satisfactory story that is of Burke showing Johnson over his fine estate at Beaconsfield, and expatiating in his exuberant style on its "liberties, privileges, easements, rights, and advantages," and of the old Doctor, the tenant of "a two-pair back" some-

where off Fleet Street, peering cautiously about, criticising everything, and observing with much coolness:

Non equidem invideo, miror magis.

A friendship like this could be disturbed but by death, and accordingly we read:

Mr. Langton one day during Johnson's last illness found Mr. Burke and four or five more friends sitting with Johnson. Mr. Burke said to him, "I am afraid, sir, such a number of us may be oppressive to you." "No, sir," said Johnson, "it is not so; and I must be in a wretched state indeed when your company would not be a delight to me." Mr. Burke, in a tremulous voice, expressive of being very tenderly affected, replied, "My dear sir, you have always been too good to me." Immediately afterwards he went away. This was the last circumstance in the acquaintance of these two eminent men.

But this is a well-worn theme, though, like some other well-worn themes, still profitable for edification or rebuke. A hundred years can make no difference to a character like Johnson's, or to a biography like Boswell's. We are not to be robbed of our conviction that this man, at all events, was both great and good.

Johnson the author is not always fairly treated. Phrases are convenient things to hand about, and it is as little the custom to inquire into their truth as it is to read the letterpress on banknotes. We are content to count banknotes, and to repeat phrases. One of these phrases is, that whilst everybody reads Boswell, nobody reads Johnson. The facts are otherwise. Everybody does not read Boswell, and a great many people do read Johnson. If it be asked, What do the general public know of Johnson's nine volumes octavo? I reply, Beshrew the general public! What in the name of the

Bodleian has the general public got to do with literature? The general public subscribes to Mudie, and has its intellectual, like its lacteal sustenance, sent round to it in carts. On Saturdays these carts, laden with "recent works in circulation," traverse the Uxbridge Road; on Wednesdays they toil up Highgate Hill, and if we may believe the reports of travellers, are occasionally seen rushing through the wilds of Camberwell and bumping over Blackheath. It is not a question of the general public, but of the lover of letters. Do Mr. Browning, Mr. Arnold, Mr. Lowell, Mr. Trevelyan, Mr. Stephen, Mr. Morley, know their Johnson? "To doubt would be disloyalty." And what these big men know in their big way hundreds of little men know in their little way. We have no writer with a more genuine literary flavour about him than the great Cham of literature. No man of letters loved letters better than he. He knew literature in all its branches—he had read books, he had written books, he had sold books, he had bought books, and he had borrowed them. Sluggish and inert in all other directions, he pranced through libraries. He loved a catalogue; he delighted in an index. He was, to employ a happy phrase of Dr. Holmes, at home amongst books, as a stable-boy is amongst horses. He cared intensely about the future of literature and the fate of literary men. "I respect Millar," he once exclaimed; "he has raised the price of literature." Now Millar was a Scotchman. Even Horne Tooke was not to stand in the pillory: "No, no, the dog has too much literature for that." The only time the author of *Rasselas* met the author of the *Wealth of Nations* witnessed a painful

scene. The English moralist gave the Scotch one the lie direct, and the Scotch moralist applied to the English one a phrase which would have done discredit to the lips of a costermonger;[1] but this notwithstanding, when Boswell reported that Adam Smith preferred rhyme to blank verse, Johnson hailed the news as enthusiastically as did Cedric the Saxon the English origin of the bravest knights in the retinue of the Norman king. "Did Adam say that?" he shouted; "I love him for it. I could hug him!" Johnson no doubt honestly believed he held George III. in reverence, but really he did not care a pin's fee for all the crowned heads of Europe. All his reverence was reserved for "poor scholars." When a small boy in a wherry, on whom had devolved the arduous task of rowing Johnson and his biographer across the Thames, said he would give all he had to know about the Argonauts, the Doctor was much pleased, and gave him, or got Boswell to give him, a double fare. He was ever an advocate of the spread of knowledge amongst all classes and both sexes. His devotion to letters has received its fitting reward, the love and respect of all "lettered hearts."

Considering him a little more in detail, we find it plain that he was a poet of no mean order. His resonant lines, informed as they often are with the force of their author's character—his strong sense, his fortitude, his gloom—take possession of the memory, and suffuse themselves through one's entire system of thought. A poet spouting his own

[1] Anyone who does not wish this story to be true, will find good reasons for disbelieving it stated in Mr. Napier's edition of Boswell, vol. iv. p. 385.

verses is usually a figure to be avoided; but one could be content to be a hundred and thirty next birthday to have heard Johnson recite, in his full sonorous voice, and with his stately elocution, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. When he came to the following lines, he usually broke down, and who can wonder?—

> Proceed, illustrious youth,
> And virtue guard thee to the throne of truth!
> Yet should thy soul indulge the gen'rous heat
> Till captive science yields her last retreat;
> Should reason guide thee with her brightest ray,
> And pour on misty doubt resistless day;
> Should no false kindness lure to loose delight,
> Nor praise relax, nor difficulty fright;
> Should tempting novelty thy cell refrain,
> And sloth effuse her opiate fumes in vain;
> Should beauty blunt on fops her fatal dart,
> Nor claim the triumph of a lettered heart;
> Should no disease thy torpid veins invade,
> Nor melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade;
> Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,
> Nor think the doom of man revers'd for thee.
> Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
> And pause a while from letters to be wise;
> There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
> Toil, envy, want, the patron and the gaol.
> See nations, slowly wise and meanly just,
> To buried merit raise the tardy bust.
> If dreams yet flatter, once again attend,
> Hear Lydiat's life, and Galileo's end.

If this be not poetry, may the name perish!

In another style, the stanzas on the young heir's majority have such great merit as to tempt one to say that the author of *The Jolly Beggars*, Robert Burns himself, might have written them. Here are four of them:

> Loosen'd from the minor's tether,
> Free to mortgage or to sell;
> Wild as wind and light as feather,
> Bid the sons of thrift farewell.

Call the Betseys, Kates, and Jennies,
All the names that banish care.
Lavish of your grandsire's guineas,
Show the spirit of an heir.

Wealth, my lad, was made to wander,
Let it wander as it will;
Call the jockey, call the pander,
Bid them come and take their fill.

When the bonny blade carouses,
Pockets full and spirits high—
What are acres? what are houses?
Only dirt—or wet or dry.

Johnson's prologues, and his lines on the death of Robert Levett, are well known. Indeed, it is only fair to say that our respected friend, the General Public, frequently has Johnsonian tags on its tongue:

Slow rises worth by poverty depressed.

The unconquered lord of pleasure and of pain.

He left the name at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral or adorn a tale.

Death, kind nature's signal of retreat.

Panting time toiled after him in vain.

All these are Johnson's, who, though he is not, like Gray, whom he hated so, all quotations, is yet oftener in men's mouths than they perhaps wot of.

Johnson's tragedy, *Irene*, need not detain us. It is unreadable; and to quote his own sensible words, "It is useless to criticise what nobody reads." It was indeed the expressed opinion of a contemporary, called Pot, that *Irene* was the finest tragedy of modern times; but on this judgment of Pot's being made known to Johnson,

he was only heard to mutter, "If Pot says so, Pot lies," as no doubt he did.

Johnson's Latin Verses have not escaped the condemnation of scholars. Whose have? The true mode of critical approach to copies of Latin verse is by the question—How bad are they? Croker took the opinion of the Marquess Wellesley as to the degree of badness of Johnson's Latin Exercises. Lord Wellesley, as became so distinguished an Etonian, felt the solemnity of the occasion, and, after bargaining for secrecy, gave it as his opinion that they were all very bad, but that some perhaps were worse than others. To this judgment I have nothing to add.

As a writer of English prose, Johnson has always enjoyed a great, albeit a somewhat awful reputation. In childish memories he is constrained to be associated with dust and dictionaries, and those provoking obstacles to a boy's reading—"long words." It would be easy to select from Johnson's writings numerous passages written in that essentially vicious style to which the name Johnsonese has been cruelly given; but the searcher could not fail to find many passages guiltless of this charge. The characteristics of Johnson's prose style are colossal good sense, though with a strong sceptical bias, good humour, vigorous language, and movement from point to point, which can only be compared to the measured tread of a well-drilled company of soldiers. Here is a passage from the Preface to Shakespeare:

> Notes are often necessary, but they are necessary evils. Let him that is yet unacquainted with the powers of Shakespeare, and who desires to feel the highest pleasure that the drama can give, read every play from the first scene to the

last, with utter negligence of all his commentators. When his fancy is once on the wing, let it not stoop at correction or explanation. When his attention is strongly engaged, let it disdain alike to turn aside to the name of Theobald and of Pope. Let him read on, through brightness and obscurity, through integrity and corruption; let him preserve his comprehension of the dialogue and his interest in the fable. And when the pleasures of novelty have ceased, let him attempt exactness and read the commentators.

Where are we to find better sense, or much better English?

In the pleasant art of chaffing an author Johnson has hardly an equal. De Quincey too often overdoes it. Macaulay seldom fails to excite sympathy with his victim. In playfulness Mr. Arnold perhaps surpasses the Doctor, but then the latter's playfulness is always leonine, whilst Mr. Arnold's is surely, sometimes, just a trifle kittenish. An example, no doubt a very good one, of Johnson's humour must be allowed me. Soame Jenyns, in his book on the *Origin of Evil*, had imagined that, as we have not only animals for food, but choose some for our diversion, the same privilege may be allowed to beings above us, "who may deceive, torment, or destroy us for the ends only of their own pleasure."

On this hint writes our merry Doctor as follows:

I cannot resist the temptation of contemplating this analogy, which I think he might have carried farther, very much to the advantage of his argument. He might have shown that these "hunters, whose game is man," have many sports analogous to our own. As we drown whelps or kittens, they amuse themselves now and then with sinking a ship, and stand round the fields of Blenheim, or the walls of Prague, as we encircle a cockpit. As we shoot a bird flying, they take a man in the midst of his business or pleasure, and knock him down with an apoplexy. Some of them perhaps are virtuosi, and delight in the operations of an asthma, as a human philosopher in the effects of the air-pump. Many a merry bout have these frolick beings at the vicissitudes of an ague, and good sport it is to see a man tumble with an epilepsy, and

revive, and tumble again, and all this he knows not why. The paroxysms of the gout and stone must undoubtedly make high mirth, especially if the play be a little diversified with the blunders and puzzles of the blind and deaf. . . . One sport the merry malice of these beings has found means of enjoying, to which we have nothing equal or similar. They now and then catch a mortal, proud of his parts, and flattered either by the submission of those who court his kindness, or the notice of those who suffer him to court theirs. A head thus prepared for the reception of false opinions, and the projection of vain designs, they easily fill with idle notions, till, in time, they make their plaything an author; their first diversion commonly begins with an ode or an epistle, then rises perhaps to a political irony, and is at last brought to its height by a treatise of philosophy. Then begins the poor animal to entangle himself in sophisms and to flounder in absurdity.

The author of the philosophical treatise *A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil* did not at all enjoy this "merry bout" of the "frolick" Johnson.

The concluding paragraphs of Johnson's Preface to his Dictionary are historical prose; and if we are anxious to find passages fit to compare with them in the melancholy roll of their cadences and in their grave sincerity and manly emotion, we must, I think, take a flying jump from Dr. Johnson to Dr. Newman.

For sensible men the world offers no better reading than the *Lives of the Poets*. They afford an admirable example of the manner of man Johnson was. The subject was suggested to him by the booksellers, whom as a body he never abused. Himself the son of a bookseller, he respected their calling. If they treated him with civility, he responded suitably. If they were rude to him, he knocked them down. These worthies chose their own poets. Johnson remained indifferent.

He knew everybody's poetry, and was always ready to write anybody's Life. If he knew the facts of a poet's life—and his knowledge was enormous on such subjects—he found room for them; if he did not, he supplied their place with his own shrewd reflections and sombre philosophy of life. It thus comes about that Johnson is every bit as interesting when he is writing about Sprat, or Smith, or Fenton, as he is when he has got Milton or Gray in hand. He is also much less provoking. My own favourite Life is that of Sir Richard Blackmore.

The poorer the poet the kindlier is the treatment he receives. Johnson kept all his rough words for Shakespeare, Milton, and Gray.

In this trait, surely an amiable one, he was much resembled by that eminent man the late Sir George Jessel, whose civility to a barrister was always in inverse ratio to the barrister's practice; and whose friendly zeal in helping young and nervous practitioners over the stiles of legal difficulty was only equalled by the fiery enthusiasm with which he thrust back the Attorney and Solicitor-General and people of that sort.

As a political thinker Johnson has not had justice. He has been lightly dismissed as the last of the old-world Tories. He was nothing of the sort. His cast of political thought is shared by thousands to this day. He represents that vast army of electors whom neither canvasser nor caucus has ever yet cajoled or bullied into a polling-booth. Newspapers may scold, platforms may shake; whatever circulars can do may be done, all that placards can tell may be told; but the fact remains that one-third of every con-

stituency in the realm shares Dr. Johnson's "narcotic indifference," and stays away.

It is, of course, impossible to reconcile all Johnson's recorded utterances with any one view of anything. When crossed in conversation or goaded by folly he was, like the prophet Habakkuk (according to Voltaire), *capable de tout.* But his dominant tone about politics was something of this sort. Provided a man lived in a state which guaranteed him private liberty and secured him public order, he was very much of a knave or altogether a fool if he troubled himself further. To go to bed when you wish, to get up when you like, to eat and drink and read what you choose, to say across your port or your tea whatever occurs to you at the moment, and to earn your living as best you may—this is what Dr. Johnson meant by private liberty. Fleet Street open day and night—this is what he meant by public order. Give a sensible man these, and take all the rest the world goes round. Tyranny was a bugbear. Either the tyranny was bearable, or it was not. If it was bearable, it did not matter; and as soon as it became unbearable the mob cut off the tyrant's head, and wise men went home to their dinner. To views of this sort he gave emphatic utterance on the well-known occasion when he gave Sir Adam Ferguson a bit of his mind. Sir Adam had innocently enough observed that the Crown had too much power. Thereupon Johnson:

> Sir, I perceive you are a vile Whig. Why all this childish jealousy of the power of the Crown? The Crown has not power enough. When I say that all governments are alike, I consider that in no government power can be abused long; mankind will not bear it. If a sovereign oppresses his people,

they will rise and cut off his head. There is a remedy in human nature against tyranny that will keep us safe under every form of government.

This is not and never was the language of Toryism. It is a much more intellectual "ism." It is indifferentism. So, too, in his able pamphlet, *The False Alarm*, which had reference to Wilkes and the Middlesex election, though he no doubt attempts to deal with the constitutional aspect of the question, the real strength of his case is to be found in passages like the following:

> The grievance which has produced all this tempest of outrage, the oppression in which all other oppressions are included, the invasion which has left us no property, the alarm that suffers no patriot to sleep in quiet, is comprised in a vote of the House of Commons, by which the freeholders of Middlesex are deprived of a Briton's birthright—representation in Parliament. They have, indeed, received the usual writ of election; but that writ, alas! was malicious mockery; they were insulted with the form, but denied the reality, for there was one man excepted from their choice. The character of the man, thus fatally excepted, I have no purpose to delineate. Lampoon itself would disdain to speak ill of him of whom no man speaks well. Every lover of liberty stands doubtful of the fate of posterity, because the chief county in England cannot take its representative from a gaol.

Temperament was of course at the bottom of this indifference. Johnson was of melancholy humour and profoundly sceptical. Cynical he was not—he loved his fellow-men; his days were full of

> Little, nameless, unremembered acts
> Of kindness and of love.

But he was as difficult to rouse to enthusiasm about humanity as is Mr. Justice Stephen. He pitied the poor devils, but he did not believe in them. They were neither happy nor wise, and he saw no reason to believe they would ever become either. "Leave

me alone," he cried to the sultry mob, bawling "Wilkes and Liberty." "I at least am not ashamed to own that I care for neither the one nor the other."

No man, however, resented more fiercely than Johnson any unnecessary interference with men who were simply going their own way. The Highlanders only knew Gaelic, yet political wiseacres were to be found objecting to their having the Bible in their own tongue. Johnson flew to arms: he wrote one of his monumental letters; the opposition was quelled, and the Gael got his Bible. So too the wicked interference with Irish enterprise, so much in vogue during the last century, infuriated him. "Sir," he said to Sir Thomas Robinson, "you talk the language of a savage. What, sir! would you prevent any people from feeding themselves, if by any honest means they can do so?"

Were Johnson to come to life again, total abstainer as he often was, he would, I expect, denounce the principle involved in "Local Option." I am not at all sure he would not borrow a guinea from a bystander and become a subscriber to the "Property Defence League"; and though it is notorious that he never read any book all through, and never could be got to believe that anybody else ever did, he would, I think, read a larger fraction of Mr. Spencer's pamphlet, *Man versus the State*, than of any other "recent work in circulation." The state of the Strand, when two vestries are at work upon it, would, I am sure, drive him into open rebellion.

As a letter-writer Johnson has great merits. Let no man despise the epistolary art. It is said to be

extinct. I doubt it. Good letters were always scarce. It does not follow that, because our grandmothers wrote long letters, they all wrote good ones, or that nobody nowadays writes good letters because most people write bad ones. Johnson wrote letters in two styles. One was monumental—more suggestive of the chisel than the pen. In the other there are traces of the same style, but, like the old Gothic architecture, it has grown domesticated, and become the fit vehicle of plain tidings of joy and sorrow—of affection, wit, and fancy. The letter to Lord Chesterfield is the most celebrated example of the monumental style. From the letters to Mrs. Thrale many good examples of the domesticated style might be selected. One must suffice:

> Queeney has been a good girl, and wrote me a letter. If Burney said she would write, she told you a fib. She writes nothing to me. She can write home fast enough. I have a good mind not to tell her that Dr. Bernard, to whom I had recommended her novel, speaks of it with great commendation, and that the copy which she lent me has been read by Dr. Lawrence three times over. And yet what a gipsy it is. She no more minds me than if I were a Branghton. Pray, speak to Queeney to write again. . . . Now you think yourself the first writer in the world for a letter about nothing. Can you write such a letter as this? So miscellaneous, with such noble disdain of regularity, like Shakespeare's works; such graceful negligence of transition, like the ancient enthusiasts. The pure voice of Nature and of Friendship. Now, of whom shall I proceed to speak? of whom but Mrs. Montague? Having mentioned Shakespeare and Nature, does not the name of Montague force itself upon me? Such were the transitions of the ancients, which now seem abrupt, because the intermediate idea is lost to modern understandings.

But the extract had better end, for there are (I fear) "modern understandings" who will not perceive the "intermediate idea" between Shakespeare and Mrs. Montague, and to whom even the name of Branghton will suggest no meaning.

Johnson's literary fame is, in our judgment, as secure as his character. Like the stone which he placed over his father's grave at Lichfield, and which, it is shameful to think, has been removed, it is "too massy and strong" to be ever much affected by the wind and weather of our literary atmosphere. "Never," so he wrote to Mrs. Thrale, "let criticisms operate upon your face or your mind; it is very rarely that an author is hurt by his critics. The blaze of reputation cannot be blown out; but it often dies in the socket. From the author of *Fitzosborne's Letters* I cannot think myself in much danger. I met him only once, about thirty years ago, and in some small dispute soon reduced him to whistle." Dr. Johnson is in no danger from anybody. None but Gargantua could blow him out, and he still burns brightly in his socket.

How long this may continue who can say? It is a far cry to 1985. Science may by that time have squeezed out literature, and the author of the *Lives of the Poets* may be dimly remembered as an odd fellow who lived in the Dark Ages, and had a very creditable fancy for making chemical experiments. On the other hand, the Spiritualists may be in possession, in which case the Cock Lane Ghost will occupy more of public attention than Boswell's hero, who will, perhaps, be reprobated as the profane utterer of these idle words: "Suppose I know a man to be so lame that he is absolutely incapable to move himself, and I find him in a different room from that in which I left him, shall I puzzle myself with idle conjectures, that perhaps his nerves have by some unknown change all at

once become effective? No, sir, it is clear how he got into a different room—he was *carried*."

We here part company with Johnson, bidding him a most affectionate farewell, and leaving him in undisturbed possession of both place and power. His character will bear investigation and some of his books perusal. The latter, indeed, may be submitted to his own test, and there is no truer one. A book, he wrote, should help us either to enjoy life or to endure it. His frequently do both.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO DR. JOHNSON

1894

DR. JOHNSON'S massive shade cannot complain of this generation. We are not all of us—or, indeed, many of us—much after his mind, but, for all that, we worship his memory. Editions of Boswell, old or new, are on every shelf; but more than this, there is a healthy and commendable disposition to recognise that great, surpassingly great, as are the merits of Boswell, still there is such a thing as a detached and separate Johnson.

It is a good thing every now and again to get rid of Boswell. It is a little ungrateful, but we have Johnson's authority for the statement that we hate our benefactors. After all, even had there been no Boswell, there would have been a Johnson. I will always stick to it that Hawkins's Life is a most readable book. Dr. Birkbeck Hill stands a good chance of being hated some day. We owed him a debt of gratitude already. He has lately added to it by publishing at the Clarendon Press, in two stately volumes, uniform with his great edition of the Life, the *Letters of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*

For a lazy man who loathed writing Dr. Johnson did not do badly—his letters to Mrs. Thrale exceed three hundred. It is not known that he ever wrote a letter to Burke. I cannot quite jump with the

humour of Dr. Hill's comment on this fact. He observes: "So far as we know, he did not write a single letter to Edmund Burke—he wrote more than three hundred to the wife of a Southwark brewer." What has the beer got to do with it? and why drag in Southwark? Every man knows, without being told, why Johnson wrote three hundred letters to Mrs. Thrale; and as for his not writing to Burke, it is notorious that the Doctor never could be got to write to anybody for information.

Dr. Hill's two volumes are as delightful books as ever issued from the press. In them Dr. Johnson is to be seen in every aspect of his character, whilst a complete study may be made from them of the enormous versatility of his style. It is hard to say what one admires most—the ardour of his affection, the piety of his nature, the friendliness of his disposition, the playfulness of his humour, or his love of learning and of letters.

What strikes one perhaps most, if you assume a merely critical attitude, is the glorious ease and aptitude of his quotations from ancient and modern writings. Of pedantry there is not a trace. Nothing is forced or dragged in. It is all, apparently, simply inevitable. You do not exclaim as you read, "What a memory the fellow has!" but merely, "How charming it all is!"

It is not difficult to construct from these two volumes alone the gospel—the familiar, the noble gospel according to Dr. Johnson. It reads somewhat as follows:

Your father begot you and your mother bore you. Honour them both. Husbands, be faithful to your wives. Wives,

forgive your husbands' unfaithfulness—once. No grown man who is dependent on the will, that is the whim, of another can be happy, and life without enjoyment is intolerable gloom. Therefore, as money means independence and enjoyment, get money, and having got it keep it. A spendthrift is a fool.

Clear your mind of cant and never debauch your understanding. The only liberty worth turning out into the street for, is the liberty to do what you like in your own house and to say what you like in your own inn. All work is bondage.

Never get excited about causes you do not understand, or about people you have never seen. Keep Corsica out of your head.

Life is a struggle with either poverty or ennui; but it is better to be rich than to be poor. Death is a terrible thing to face. The man who says he is not afraid of it lies. Yet, as murderers have met it bravely on the scaffold, when the time comes so perhaps may I. In the meantime I am horribly afraid. The future is dark. I should like more evidence of the immortality of the soul.

There is great solace in talk. We—you and I—are shipwrecked on a wave-swept rock. At any moment one or other of us, perhaps both, may be carried out to sea and lost. For the time being we have a modicum of light and warmth, of meat and drink. Let us constitute ourselves a club, stretch out our legs and talk. We have minds, memories, varied experiences, different opinions. Sir, let us talk, not as men who mock at fate, not with coarse speech or foul tongue, but with a manly mixture of the gloom that admits the inevitable, and the merriment that observes the incongruous. Thus talking we shall learn to love one another, not sentimentally but fundamentally.

Cultivate your mind, if you happen to have one. Care greatly for books and literature. Venerate poor scholars, but don't shout for "Wilkes and Liberty!" The one is a whoremonger, the other a flatulency.

If any tyrant prevents your goings out and your comings in, fill your pockets with large stones and kill him as he passes. Then go home and think no more about it. Never theorise about Revolution. Finally, pay your score at your club and your final debt to Nature generously and without casting the account too narrowly. Don't be a prig like Sir John Hawkins, or your own enemy like Bozzy, or a Whig like Burke, or a vile wretch like Rousseau, or pretend to be an atheist like Hume, but be a good fellow, and don't insist upon being remembered more than a month after you are dead.

This is but the First Lesson. To compose the Second would be a more difficult task and must

not be here attempted. These two volumes of Dr. Hill are endless in their variety. Johnson was gloomy enough, and many of his letters may well move you to tears, but his was ever a human gloom. The year before his death he writes to Mrs. Thrale:

> The black dog I hope always to resist and in time to drive, though I am deprived of almost all those that used to help me. The neighbourhood is impoverished. I had once Richardson and Lawrence in my reach. Mrs. Allen is dead. My house has lost Levett, a man who took interest in everything and therefore ready at conversation. Mrs. Williams is so weak that she can be a companion no longer. When I rise my breakfast is solitary—the black dog waits to share it; from breakfast to dinner he continues barking, except that Dr. Brocklesby for a little keeps him at a distance. Dinner with a sick woman you may venture to suppose not much better than solitary. After dinner, what remains but to count the clock and hope for that sleep which I can scarce expect? Night comes at last, and some hours of restlessness and confusion bring me again to a day of solitude. What shall exclude the black dog from an habitation like this? If I were a little richer I would perhaps take some cheerful female into the house.

It is a melancholy picture, but the "cheerful female" shoots a ray of light across the gloom. Everyone should add these two volumes to his library, and if he has not a library, let him begin making one with them.

THE JOHNSONIAN LEGEND

1906

THE ten handsome volumes which the indefatigable and unresting zeal of Dr. Birkbeck Hill, and the high spirit of the Clarendon Press, have edited, arranged, printed, and published for the benefit of the world and the propagation of the Gospel according to Dr. Johnson are pleasant things to look upon. I hope the enterprise has proved remunerative to those concerned, but I doubt it. The parsimony of the public in the matter of books is pitiful. The ordinary purse-carrying Englishman holds in his head a ready-reckoner or scale of charges by which he tests his purchases—so much for a dinner, so much for a bottle of champagne, so much for a trip to Paris, so much for a pair of gloves, and so much for a book. These ten volumes would cost him £4 9s. 3d. "Whew! What a price for a book, and where are they to be put, and who is to dust them?" Idle questions! As for room, a bicycle takes more room than 1000 books; and as for dust, it is a delusion. You should never dust books. There let it lie until the rare hour arrives when you want to read a particular volume; then warily approach it with a snow-white napkin, take it down from its shelf, and, withdrawing to some back apartment, proceed to cleanse the tome. Dr. Johnson adopted other methods. Every now and

again he drew on huge gloves, such as those once worn by hedgers and ditchers, and then, clutching his folios and octavos, he banged and buffeted them together until he was enveloped in a cloud of dust. This violent exercise over, the good doctor restored the volumes, all battered and bruised, to their places, where, of course, the dust resettled itself as speedily as possible.

Dr. Johnson could make books better than anybody, but his notions of dusting them were primitive and erroneous. But the room and the dust are mere subterfuges. The truth is, there is a disinclination to pay £4 9s. 3d. for the ten volumes containing the complete Johnsonian legend. To quarrel with the public is idiotic and most un-Johnsonian. "Depend upon it, sir," said the Sage, "every state of society is as luxurious as it can be." We all, a handful of misers excepted, spend more money than we can afford upon luxuries, but what those luxuries are to be is largely determined for us by the fashions of our time. If we do not buy these ten volumes, it is not because we would not like to have them, but because we want the money they cost for something we want more. As for dictating to men how they are to spend their money, it were both a folly and an impertinence.

These ten volumes end Dr. Hill's labours as an editor of *Johnson's Life and Personalia*, but did not leave him free. He had set his mind on an edition of the *Lives of the Poets*. This, to the regret of all who knew him either personally or as a Johnsonian, he did not live to see through the press. But it is soon to appear, and will be a storehouse of anecdote and a miracle of cross-

references. A poet who has been dead a century or two is amazing good company—at least, he never fails to be so when Johnson tells us as much of his story as he can remember without undue research, with that irony of his, that vast composure, that humorous perception of the greatness and the littleness of human life, that make the brief records of a Sprat, a Walsh, and a Fenton so divinely entertaining. It is an immense testimony to the healthiness of the Johnsonian atmosphere that Dr. Hill, who breathed it almost exclusively for a quarter of a century and upwards, showed no symptoms either of moral deterioration or physical exhaustion. His appetite to the end was as keen as ever, nor was his temper obviously the worse. The task never became a toil, not even a tease. "You have but two subjects," said Johnson to Boswell: "yourself and myself. I am sick of both." Johnson hated to be talked about, or to have it noticed what he ate or what he had on. For a hundred years now last past he has been more talked about and noticed than anybody else. But Dr. Hill never grew sick of Dr. Johnson.

The *Johnsonian Miscellanies*[1] open with the *Prayers and Meditations*, first published by the Rev. Dr. Strahan in 1785. Strahan was the Vicar of Islington, and into his hands at an early hour one morning Dr. Johnson, then approaching his last days, put the papers, "with instructions for committing them to the press and with a promise to prepare a sketch of his own life to accompany them." This promise the doctor was not able to

[1] Two volumes. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1897.

keep, and shortly after his death his reverend friend published the papers just as they were put into his hands. One wonders he had the heart to do it, but the clerical mind is sometimes strangely insensitive to the privacy of thought. But, as in the case of most indelicate acts, you cannot but be glad the thing was done. The original manuscript is at Pembroke College, Oxford. In these *Prayers and Meditations* we see an awful figure. The *solitary* Johnson, perturbed, tortured, oppressed, in distress of body and of mind, full of alarms for the future both in this world and the next, teased by importunate and perplexing thoughts, harassed by morbid infirmities, vexed by idle yet constantly recurring scruples, with an inherited melancholy and a threatened sanity, is a gloomy and even a terrible picture, and forms a striking contrast to the social hero, the triumphant dialectician of Boswell, Mrs. Thrale, and Madame D'Arblay. Yet it is relieved by its inherent humanity, its fellowship and feeling. Dr. Johnson's piety is delightfully full of human nature—far too full to please the poet Cowper, who wrote of the *Prayers and Meditations* as follows:

> If it be fair to judge of a book by an extract, I do not wonder that you were so little edified by Johnson's Journal. It is even more ridiculous than was poor Rutty's of flatulent memory. The portion of it given us in this day's paper contains not one sentiment worth one farthing, except the last, in which he resolves to bind himself with no more unbidden obligations. Poor man! one would think that to pray for his dead wife and to pinch himself with Church fasts had been almost the whole of his religion.

It were hateful to pit one man's religion against another's, but it is only fair to Dr. Johnson's

religion to remember that, odd compound as it was, it saw him through the long struggle of life, and enabled him to meet the death he so honestly feared like a man and a Christian. The *Prayers and Meditations* may not be an edifying book in Cowper's sense of the word; there is nothing triumphant about it; it is full of infirmities and even absurdities; but, for all that, it contains more piety than ten thousand religious biographies. Nor must the evidence it contains of weakness be exaggerated. Beset with infirmities, a lazy dog, as he often declared himself to be, he yet managed to do a thing or two. Here, for example, is an entry:

29, Easter Eve (1777).

I rose and again prayed with reference to my departed wife. I neither read nor went to church, yet can scarcely tell how I have been hindered. I treated with booksellers on a bargain, but the time was not long.

Too long, perhaps, for Johnson's piety, but short enough to enable the booksellers to make an uncommon good bargain for the *Lives of the Poets*. "As to the terms," writes Mr. Dilly, "it was left entirely to the doctor to name his own; he mentioned 200 guineas; it was immediately agreed to." The business-like Malone makes the following observation on the transaction: "Had he asked 1000, or even 1500, guineas the booksellers, who knew the value of his name, would doubtless have readily given it." Dr. Johnson, though the son of a bookseller, was the least tradesmanlike of authors. The bargain was bad, but the book was good.

A year later we find this record:

Monday, *April* 20 (1778).

After a good night, as I am forced to reckon, I rose seasonably and prayed, using the collect for yesterday. In reviewing

my time from Easter, 1777, I find a very melancholy and shameful blank. So little has been done that days and months are without any trace. My health has, indeed, been very much interrupted. My nights have been commonly not only restless but painful and fatiguing. . . . I have written a little of the *Lives of the Poets*, I think, with all my usual vigour. I have made sermons, perhaps, as readily as formerly. My memory is less faithful in retaining names, and, I am afraid, in retaining occurrences. Of this vacillation and vagrancy of mind I impute a great part to a fortuitous and unsettled life, and therefore purpose to spend my life with more method.

This year the 28th of March passed away without memorial. Poor Tetty, whatever were our faults and failings, we loved each other. I did not forget thee yesterday. Couldst thou have lived! I am now, with the help of God, to begin a new life.

Dr. Hill prints an interesting letter of Mr. Jowett's, in which occur the following observations:

It is a curious question whether Boswell has unconsciously misrepresented Johnson in any respect. I think, judging from the materials, which are supplied chiefly by himself, that in one respect he has. He has represented him more as a sage and philosopher in his conduct as well as his conversation than he really was, and less as a rollicking "King of Society." The gravity of Johnson's own writings tends to confirm this, as I suspect, erroneous impression. His religion was fitful and intermittent; and when once the ice was broken he enjoyed Jack Wilkes, though he refused to shake hands with Hume. I was much struck with a remark of Sir John Hawkins (excuse me if I have mentioned this to you before): "He was the most humorous man I ever knew."

Mr. Jowett's letter raises some nice points—the Wilkes and Hume point, for example. Dr. Johnson hated both blasphemy and bawd, but he hated blasphemy most. Mr. Jowett shared the doctor's antipathies, but very likely hated bawd more than he did blasphemy. But, as I have already said, the point is a nice one. To crack jokes with Wilkes at the expense of Boswell and the Scotch seems to me a very different thing from shaking hands with Hume. But, indeed, it is absurd to overlook either Johnson's melancholy piety or his abounding

humour and love of fun and nonsense. His *Prayers and Meditations* are full of the one, Boswell and Mrs. Thrale and Madame D'Arblay are full of the other. Boswell's *Johnson* has superseded the "authorised biography" by Sir John Hawkins, and Dr. Hill did well to include in these *Miscellanies* Hawkins' inimitable description of the memorable banquet given at the Devil Tavern, near Temple Bar, in the spring of 1751, to celebrate the publication of Mrs. Charlotte Lennox's first novel. What delightful revelry! what innocent mirth! prolonged though it was till long after dawn. Mrs. Lennox died in distress in 1804, at the age of eighty-three. Could Johnson but have lived he would have lent her his helping hand. He was no fair-weather friend, but shares with Charles Lamb the honour of being able to unite narrow means and splendid munificence.

I must end with an anecdote:

"Henderson asked the doctor's opinion of *Dido* and its author. 'Sir,' said Dr. Johnson, 'I never did the man an injury. Yet he would read his tragedy to me.'"

BOSWELL AS BIOGRAPHER

1906

BOSWELL'S position in English literature cannot be disputed, nor can he ever be displaced from it. He has written our greatest biography. That is all. Theorise about it as much as you like, account for it how you may, the fact remains. "Alone I did it." There has been plenty of theorising. Lord Macaulay took the subject in hand and tossed it up and down for half a dozen pages with a gusto that drove home to many minds the conviction, the strange conviction, that our greatest biography was written by one of the very smallest men that ever lived, "a man of the meanest and feeblest intellect"—by a dunce, a parasite, and a coxcomb; by one "who, if he had not been a great fool, would never have been a great writer." So far Macaulay, *anno Domini* 1831, in the vigorous pages of the *Edinburgh Review*. A year later appears in *Fraser's Magazine* another theory by another hand, not then famous, Mr. Thomas Carlyle. I own to an inordinate affection for Mr. Carlyle as "literary critic." As philosopher and sage, he has served our turn. We have had the fortune, good or bad, to outlive him; and our sad experience is that death makes a mighty difference to all but the very greatest. The sight of the author of *Sartor Resartus* in a Chelsea omnibus,

the sound of Dr. Newman's voice preaching to a small congregation in Birmingham, kept alive in our minds the vision of their greatness—it seemed then as if that greatness could know no limit; but no sooner had they gone away, than somehow or another one became conscious of some deficiency in their intellectual positions—the tide of human thought rushed visibly by them, and it became plain that to no other generation would either of these men be what they had been to their own. But Mr. Carlyle as literary critic has a tenacious grasp, and Boswell was a subject made for his hand. "Your Scottish laird, says an English naturalist of those days, may be defined as the hungriest and vainest of all bipeds yet known." Carlyle knew the type well enough. His general description of Boswell is savage:

> Boswell was a person whose mean or bad qualities lay open to the general eye, visible, palpable to the dullest. His good qualities, again, belonged not to the time he lived in; were far from common then; indeed, in such a degree were almost unexampled; not recognisable, therefore, by everyone; nay, apt even, so strange had they grown, to be confounded with the very vices they lay contiguous to and had sprung out of. That he was a wine-bibber and good liver, gluttonously fond of whatever would yield him a little solacement, were it only of a stomachic character, is undeniable enough. That he was vain, heedless, a babbler, had much of the sycophant, alternating with the braggadocio, curiously spiced, too, with an all-pervading dash of the coxcomb; that he gloried much when the tailor by a court suit had made a new man of him; that he appeared at the Shakespeare Jubilee with a riband imprinted "Corsica Boswell" round his hat, and, in short, if you will, lived no day of his life without saying and doing more than one pretentious ineptitude, all this unhappily is evident as the sun at noon. The very look of Boswell seems to have signified so much. In that cocked nose, cocked partly in triumph over his weaker fellow-creatures, partly to snuff up the smell of coming pleasure and scent it from afar, in those big cheeks, hanging like half-filled wine-skins, still

able to contain more, in that coarsely-protruded shelf mouth, that fat dew-lapped chin; in all this who sees not sensuality, pretension, boisterous imbecility enough? The underpart of Boswell's face is of a low, almost brutish character.

This is character-painting with a vengeance. Portrait of a Scotch laird by the son of a Scotch peasant. Carlyle's Boswell is to me the very man. If, so, Carlyle's paradox seems as great as Macaulay's, for though Carlyle does not call Boswell a great fool in plain set terms, he goes very near it. But he keeps open a door through which he effects his escape. Carlyle sees in Bozzy "the old reverent feeling of discipleship, in a word, hero-worship."

How the babbling Bozzy, inspired only by love and the recognition and vision which love can lend, epitomises nightly the words of Wisdom, the deeds and aspects of Wisdom, and so, little by little, unconsciously works together for us a whole "Johnsoniad"—a more free, perfect, sunlit and spirit-speaking likeness than for many centuries has been drawn by man of man.

This I think is a little overdrawn. That Boswell loved Johnson, God forbid I should deny. But that he was inspired only by love to write his life, I gravely question. Boswell was, as Carlyle has said, a greedy man—and especially was he greedy of fame—and he saw in his revered friend a splendid subject for artistic biographic treatment. Here is where both Macaulay and Carlyle are, as I suggest, wrong. Boswell was a fool, but only in the sense in which hundreds of great artists have been fools; on his own lines, and across his own bit of country, he was no fool. He did not accidentally stumble across success, but he deliberately aimed at what he hit. Read his Preface and you will discover his method. He was as much an artist as either of his two famous critics. Where Carlyle goes astray is

in attributing to discipleship what was mainly due to a dramatic sense. However, theories are no great matter.

Our means of knowledge of James Boswell are derived mainly from himself; he is his own incriminator. In addition to the Life there is the Corsican Tour, the Hebrides Tour, the letters to Erskine and to Temple, and a few insignificant occasional publications in the shape of letters to the people of Scotland, etc. With these before him it is impossible for any biographer to approach Bozzy in a devotional attitude; he was all Carlyle calls him. Our sympathies are with his father, who despised him, and with his son, who was ashamed of him. It is indeed strange to think of him staggering, like the drunkard he was, between these two respectable and even stately figures—the Senator of the Court of Justice and the courtly scholar and antiquary. And yet it is to the drunkard humanity is debtor. Respectability is not everything.

Boswell had many literary projects and ambitions, and never intended to be known merely as the biographer of Johnson. He proposed to write a life of Lord Kaimes and to compose memoirs of Hume. It seems he did write a life of Sir Robert Sibbald. He had other plans in his head, but dissipation and a steadily increasing drunkenness destroyed them all. As inveterate book-hunter, I confess to a great fancy to lay hands on his *Dorando: A Spanish Tale*, a shilling book published in Edinburgh during the progress of the once famous Douglas case, and ordered to be suppressed as contempt of court after it had been through three

editions. It is said, probably hastily, that no copy is known to exist—a dreary fate which, according to Lord Macaulay, might have attended upon the *Life of Johnson* had the copyright of that work become the property of Boswell's son, who hated to hear it mentioned. It is not, however, very easy to get rid of any book once it is published, and I do not despair of reading *Dorando* before I die.

Note.—The late George Inglis, of the Hope Trust, Edinburgh, was good enough, after reading this passage, to send me a type-written copy of *Dorando*, which he made for me from a copy of the original in the Library of the University of Edinburgh. So now I have read *Dorando*.

EDMUND BURKE

A LECTURE DELIVERED BEFORE THE EDINBURGH PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

1887

MR. JOHN MORLEY, who amongst other things has written two admirable books about Edmund Burke, is to be found in the Preface to the second of them apologising for having introduced into the body of the work extracts from his former volume—conduct which he seeks to justify by quoting from the Greek (always a desirable thing to do when in a difficulty), to prove that, though you may say what you have to say well once, you cannot so say it twice.

A difficulty somewhat of the same kind cannot fail to be felt by every one who takes upon himself to write on Burke; for however innocent a man's own past life may be of any public references to the subject, the very many good things other men have said about it must seriously interfere with true liberty of treatment.

Hardly any man, and certainly no politician, has been so bepraised as Burke, whose very name, suggesting, as it does, splendour of diction, has tempted those who would praise him to do so in a highly decorated style, and it would have been easy work to have brought together a sufficient number of animated passages from the works of

well-known writers all dedicated to the greater glory of Edmund Burke, and then to have tagged on half-a-dozen specimens of his own resplendent rhetoric, and so to have come to an apparently natural and long-desired conclusion without exciting any more than the usual post-lectorial grumble.

This course, however, not recommending itself, some other method had to be discovered. Happily, it is out of the question within present limits to give any proper summary of Burke's public life. This great man was not, like some modern politicians, a specialist, confining his activities within the prospectus of an association; nor was he, like some others, a thing of shreds and patches, busily employed to-day picking up the facts with which he will overwhelm his opponents on the morrow; but was one ever ready to engage with all comers on all subjects from out the stores of his accumulated knowledge. Even were we to confine ourselves to those questions only which engaged Burke's most powerful attention, enlisted his most active sympathy, elicited his most bewitching rhetoric, we should still find ourselves called upon to grapple with problems as vast and varied as Economic Reform, the Status of our Colonies, our Empire in India, our relations with Ireland both in respect to her trade and her prevalent religion; and then, blurring the picture, as some may think—certainly rendering it Titianesque and gloomy—we have the spectacle of Burke in his old age, like another Laocoön, writhing and wrestling with the French Revolution; and it may serve to give us some dim notion of how great a man Burke was, of how

affluent a mind, of how potent an imagination, of how resistless an energy, that even when his sole unassisted name is pitted against the outcome of centuries, and we say Burke and the French Revolution, we are not overwhelmed by any sense of obvious absurdity or incongruity.

What I propose to do is merely to consider a little Burke's life prior to his obtaining a seat in Parliament, and then to refer to any circumstances which may help us to account for the fact that this truly extraordinary man, whose intellectual resources beggar the imagination, and who devoted himself to politics with all the forces of his nature, never so much as attained to a seat in the Cabinet —a feat one has known to be accomplished by persons of no proved intellectual agility. Having done this, I shall then, bearing in mind the aphorism of Lord Beaconsfield, that it is always better to be impudent than servile, essay an analysis of the essential elements of Burke's character.

The first great fact to remember is, that the Edmund Burke we are all agreed in regarding as one of the proudest memories of the House of Commons was an Irishman. When we are in our next fit of political depression about that island, and are about piously to wish, as the poet Spenser tells us men were wishing even in his time, that it were not adjacent, let us do a little national stock-taking, and calculate profits as well as losses. Burke was not only an Irishman, but a typical one—of the very kind many Englishmen, and even possibly some Scotchmen, make a point of disliking. I do not say he was an aboriginal Irishman, but his ancestors are said to have settled in the county

of Galway, under Strongbow, in King Henry the Second's time, when Ireland was first conquered and our troubles began. This, at all events, is a better Irish pedigree than Mr. Parnell's.

Skipping six centuries, we find Burke's father an attorney in Dublin—which somehow sounds a very Irish thing to be—who in 1725 married a Miss Nagle, and had fifteen children. The marriage of Burke's parents was of the kind called mixed—a term which doubtless admits of wide application, but when employed technically signifies that the religious faith of the spouses was different; one, the father, being a Protestant, and the lady an adherent to what used to be pleasantly called the "old religion." The severer spirit now dominating Catholic councils has condemned these marriages, on the score of their bad theology and their lax morality; but the practical politician, who is not usually much of a theologian—though Lord Melbourne and Mr. Gladstone are distinguished exceptions—and whose moral conscience is apt to be robust (and here I believe there are no exceptions), cannot but regret that so good an opportunity of lubricating religious differences with the sweet oil of the domestic affections should be lost to us in these days of bitterness and dissension. Burke was brought up in the Protestant faith of his father, and was never in any real danger of deviating from it; but I cannot doubt that his regard for his Catholic fellow-subjects, his fierce repudiation of the infamies of the Penal Code—whose horrors he did something to mitigate—his respect for antiquity, and his historic sense, were all quickened by the fact that a tenderly loved and

loving mother belonged through life and in death to an ancient and an outraged faith.

The great majority of Burke's brothers and sisters, like those of Laurence Sterne, were "not made to live"; and out of the fifteen but three, beside himself, attained maturity. These were his eldest brother, Garrett, on whose death Edmund succeeded to the patrimonial Irish estate, which he sold; his younger brother, Richard, a highly speculative gentleman, who always lost; and his sister, Juliana, who married a Mr. French, and was, as became her mother's daughter, a rigid Roman Catholic—who, so we read, was accustomed every Christmas Day to invite to the Hall the maimed, the aged, and distressed of her vicinity to a plentiful repast, during which she waited upon them as a servant. A sister like this never did any man any serious harm.

Edmund Burke was born in 1729, in Dublin, and was taught his rudiments in the country—first by a Mr. O'Halloran, and afterwards by a Mr. Fitz-Gerald, village pedagogues both, who at all events succeeded in giving their charge a brogue which death alone could silence. Burke passed from their hands to an academy at Ballitore, kept by a Quaker, from whence he proceeded to Trinity College, Dublin. He was thus not only Irish born, but Irish bred. His intellectual habit of mind exhibited itself early. He belonged to the happy family of omnivorous readers, and, in the language of his latest schoolmaster, he went to college with a larger miscellaneous stock of reading than was usual with one of his years; which, being interpreted out of pedagogic into plain English, means

that "our good Edmund" was an enormous devourer of poetry and novels, and so he remained to the end of his days. That he always preferred Fielding to Richardson is satisfactory, since it pairs him off nicely with Dr. Johnson, whose preference was the other way, and so helps to keep an interesting question wide open. His passion for the poetry of Virgil is significant. His early devotion to Edward Young, the grandiose author of the *Night Thoughts*, is not to be wondered at; though the inspiration of the youthful Burke, either as poet or critic, may be questioned, when we find him rapturously scribbling in the margin of his copy:

> Jove claimed the verse old Homer sung,
> But God Himself inspired Dr. Young.

But a boy's enthusiasm for a favourite poet is a thing to rejoice over. The years that bring the philosophic mind will not bring—they must find—enthusiasm.

In 1750, Burke (being then twenty-one) came for the first time to London, to do what so many of his lively young countrymen are still doing—though they are beginning to make a grievance even of that—eat his dinners at the Middle Temple, and so qualify himself for the Bar. Certainly that student was in luck who found himself in the same mess with Burke; and yet so stupid are men—so prone to rest with their full weight on the immaterial and slide over the essential—that had that good fortune been ours we should probably have been more taken up with Burke's brogue than with his brains. Burke came to London with a cultivated curiosity, and in no spirit of desperate

determination to make his fortune. That the study of the law interested him cannot be doubted, for everything interested him, particularly the stage. Like the sensible Irishman he was, he lost his heart to Peg Woffington on the first opportunity. He was fond of roaming about the country, during, it is to be hoped, vacation-time only, and is to be found writing the most cheerful letters to his friends in Ireland (all of whom are persuaded that he is going some day to be somebody, though sorely puzzled to surmise what thing or when, so pleasantly does he take life), from all sorts of out-of-the-way country places, where he lodges with quaint old landladies who wonder maternally why he never gets drunk, and generally mistake him for an author until he pays his bill. When in town he frequented debating societies in Fleet Street and Covent Garden, and made his first speeches; for which purpose he would, unlike some debaters, devote studious hours to getting up the subjects to be discussed. There is good reason to believe that it was in this manner his attention was first directed to India. He was at all times a great talker, and, Dr. Johnson's dictum notwithstanding, a good listener. He was endlessly interested in everything—in the state of the crops, in the last play, in the details of all trades, the rhythm of all poems, the plots of all novels, and indeed in the course of every manufacture. And so for six years he went up and down, to and fro, gathering information, imparting knowledge, and preparing himself, though he knew not for what.

The attorney in Dublin grew anxious, and searched for precedents of a son behaving like

his, and rising to eminence. Had his son got the legal mind?—which, according to a keen observer, chiefly displays itself by illustrating the obvious, explaining the evident, and expatiating on the commonplace. Edmund's powers of illustration, explanation, and expatiation could not indeed be questioned; but then the subjects selected for the exhibition of those powers were very far indeed from being obvious, evident, or commonplace; and the attorney's heart grew heavy within him. The paternal displeasure was signified in the usual manner—the supplies were cut off. Edmund Burke, however, was no ordinary prodigal, and his reply to his father's expostulations took the unexpected and unprecedented shape of a copy of a second and enlarged edition of his treatise on the *Sublime and Beautiful*, which he had published in 1756 at the price of three shillings. Burke's father promptly sent the author a bank-bill for £100—conduct on his part which, considering he had sent his son to London and maintained him there for six years to study law, was, in my judgment, both sublime and beautiful. In the same year Burke published another pamphlet—a one-and-sixpenny affair—written ironically, in the style of Lord Bolingbroke, and called *A Vindication of Natural Society; or a View of the Miseries and Evils arising to Mankind from Every Species of Civil Society*. Irony is a dangerous weapon for a public man to have ever employed, and in after-life Burke had frequently to explain that he was not serious. On these two pamphlets' airy pinions Burke floated into the harbour of literary fame. No less a man than the great David Hume referred

to him, in a letter to the hardly less great Adam Smith, as an Irish gentleman who had written a "very pretty treatise on the Sublime." After these efforts, Burke, as became an established wit, went to Bath to recruit, and there, fitly enough, fell in love. The lady was Miss Jane Mary Nugent, the daughter of a celebrated Bath physician; and it is pleasant to be able to say of the marriage that was shortly solemnised between the young couple, that it was a happy one, and then to go on our way, leaving them—where man and wife ought to be left—alone. Oddly enough, Burke's wife was also the offspring of a "mixed marriage"—only in her case it was the father who was the Catholic; consequently both Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Burke were of the same way of thinking, but each had a parent of the other way. Although getting married is no part of the curriculum of a law student, Burke's father seems to have come to the conclusion that after all it was a greater distinction for an attorney in Dublin to have a son living amongst the wits in London, and discoursing familiarly on the "Sublime and Beautiful," than one prosecuting some poor countryman, with a brogue as rich as his own, for stealing a pair of breeches; for we find him generously allowing the young couple £200 a year, which no doubt went some way towards maintaining them. Burke, who was now in his twenty-eighth year, seems to have given up all notion of the law. In 1758 he wrote for Dodsley the first volume of the *Annual Register*, a melancholy series which continues to this day. For doing this he got £100. Burke was by this time a well-known figure in London literary society, and was busy making for

himself a huge private reputation. The Christmas Day of 1758 witnessed a singular scene at the dinner table of David Garrick. Dr. Johnson, then in the full vigour of his mind, and with the all-dreaded weapons of his dialectics kept burnished by daily use, was flatly contradicted by a fellow-guest some twenty years his junior, and, what is more, submitted to it without a murmur. One of the diners, Arthur Murphy, was so struck by this occurrence, unique in his long experience of the Doctor, that on returning home he recorded the fact in his journal, but ventured no explanation of it. It can only be accounted for—so at least I venture to think—by the combined effect of four wholly independent circumstances: *First*, the day was Christmas Day, a day of peace and goodwill, and our beloved Doctor was amongst the sincerest, though most argumentative of Christians, and a great observer of days. *Second*, the house was David Garrick's, and consequently we may be certain that the dinner had been a superlatively good one; and has not Boswell placed on record Johnson's opinion of the man who professed to be indifferent about his dinner? *Third*, the subject under discussion was India, about which Johnson knew he knew next to nothing. And *fourth*, the offender was Edmund Burke, whom Johnson loved from the first day he set eyes upon him to their last sad parting by the waters of death.

In 1761 that shrewd old gossip, Horace Walpole, met Burke for the first time at dinner, and remarks of him in a letter to George Montague:

> I dined at Hamilton's yesterday; there were Garrick, and young Mr. Burke, who wrote a book in the style of Lord

Bolingbroke, that was much admired. He is a sensible man, but has not worn off his authorism yet, and thinks there is nothing so charming as writers, and to be one. He will know better one of these days.

But great as were Burke's literary powers, and passionate as was his fondness for letters and for literary society, he never seems to have felt that the main burden of his life lay in that direction. He looked to the public service, and this though he always believed that the pen of a great writer was a more powerful and glorious weapon than any to be found in the armoury of politics. This faith of his comes out sometimes queerly enough. For example, when Dr. Robertson in 1777 sent Burke his cheerful *History of America* in quarto volumes, Burke, in the most perfect good faith, closes a long letter of thanks thus:

You will smile when I send you a trifling temporary production made for the occasion of the day, and to perish with it, in return for your immortal work.

I have no desire, least of all in Edinburgh, to say anything disrespectful of Principal Robertson; but still, when we remember that the temporary production he got in exchange for his *History of America* was Burke's immortal letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol on the American War, we must, I think, be forced to admit that, as so often happens when a Scotchman and an Irishman do business together, the former got the better of the bargain.

Burke's first public employment was of a humble character, and might well have been passed over in a sentence, had it not terminated in a most delightful quarrel, in which Burke conducted himself like an Irishman of genius. Some time in 1759 he became acquainted with William Gerard

Hamilton, commonly called "Single-speech Hamilton," on account of the celebrity he gained from his first speech in Parliament, and the steady way in which his oratorical reputation went on waning ever after. In 1761 this gentleman went over to Ireland as Chief Secretary, and Burke accompanied him as the Secretary's secretary, or, in the unlicensed speech of Dublin, as Hamilton's jackal. This arrangement was eminently satisfactory to Hamilton, who found, as generations of men have found after him, Burke's brains very useful, and he determined to borrow them for the period of their joint lives. Animated by this desire, in itself praiseworthy, he busied himself in procuring for Burke a pension of £300 a year on the Irish establishment, and then the simple "Single-speech" thought the transaction closed. He had bought his poor man of genius, and paid for him on the nail with other people's money. Nothing remained but for Burke to draw his pension and devote the rest of his life to maintaining Hamilton's reputation. There is nothing at all unusual in this, and I have no doubt Burke would have stuck to his bargain, had not Hamilton conceived the fatal idea that Burke's brains were *exclusively* his (Hamilton's). Then the situation became one of risk and apparent danger.

Burke's imagination began playing round the subject: he saw himself a slave, blotted out of existence—mere fuel for Hamilton's flame. In a week he was in a towering passion. Few men can afford to be angry. It is a run upon their intellectual resources they cannot meet. But Burke's treasury could well afford the luxury; and his

letters to Hamilton make delightful reading to those who, like myself, dearly love a dispute when conducted according to the rules of the game by men of great intellectual wealth. Hamilton demolished and reduced to stony silence, Burke sat down again and wrote long letters to all his friends, telling them the whole story from beginning to end. I must be allowed a quotation from one of these letters, for this really is not so frivolous a matter as I am afraid I have made it appear—a quotation of which this much may be said, that nothing more delightfully Burkean is to be found anywhere:

MY DEAR MASON,

I am hardly able to tell you how much satisfaction I had in your letter. Your approbation of my conduct makes me believe much the better of you and myself; and I assure you that that approbation came to me very seasonably. Such proofs of a warm, sincere, and disinterested friendship were not wholly unnecessary to my support at a time when I experienced such bitter effects of the perfidy and ingratitude of much longer and much closer connections. The way in which you take up my affairs binds me to you in a manner I cannot express; for to tell you the truth, I never can (knowing as I do the principles upon which I always endeavour to act) submit to any sort of compromise of my character; and I shall never, therefore, look upon those who, after hearing the whole story, do not think me *perfectly* in the right, and do not consider Hamilton an infamous scoundrel, to be in the smallest degree my friends, or even to be persons for whom I am bound to have the slightest esteem, as fair and just estimators of the characters and conduct of men. Situated as I am, and feeling as I do, I should be just as well pleased that they totally condemned me, as that they should say there were faults on both sides, or that it was a disputable case, as I hear is (I cannot forbear saying) the affected language of some persons. . . . You cannot avoid remarking, my dear Mason, and I hope not without some indignation, the unparalleled singularity of my situation. Was ever a man before me expected to enter into formal, direct, and undisguised slavery? Did ever man before him confess an attempt to decoy a man into such an alleged contract, not to say anything

of the impudence of regularly pleading it? If such an attempt be wicked and unlawful (and I am sure no one ever doubted it), I have only to confess his charge, and to admit myself his dupe, to make him pass, on his own showing, for the most consummate villain that ever lived. The only difference between us is, not whether he is not a rogue—for he not only admits but pleads the facts that demonstrate him to be so; but only whether I was such a fool as to sell myself absolutely for a consideration which, so far from being adequate, if any such could be adequate, is not even so much as certain. Not to value myself as a gentleman, a free man, a man of education, and one pretending to literature; is there any situation in life so low, or even so criminal, that can subject a man to the possibility of such an engagement? Would you dare attempt to bind your footman to such terms? Will the law suffer a felon sent to the plantations to bind himself for his life, and to renounce all possibility either of elevation or quiet? And am I to defend myself for not doing what no man is suffered to do, and what it would be criminal in any man to submit to? You will excuse me for this heat.

I not only excuse Burke for his heat, but love him for letting me warm my hands at it after a lapse of a hundred and twenty years.

Burke was more fortunate in his second master, for in 1765, being then thirty-six years of age, he became private secretary to the new Prime Minister, the Marquis of Rockingham; was by the interest of Lord Verney returned to Parliament for Wendover, in Bucks; and on January 27th, 1766, his voice was first heard in the House of Commons.

The Rockingham Ministry deserves well of the historian, and on the whole has received its deserts. Lord Rockingham, the Duke of Richmond, Lord John Cavendish, Mr. Dowdeswell, and the rest of them, were good men and true, judged by an ordinary standard; and when contrasted with most of their political competitors, they almost approach the ranks of saints and angels. However, after a year and twenty days, his Majesty King George

the Third managed to get rid of them, and to keep them at bay for fifteen years. But their first term of office, though short, lasted long enough to establish a friendship of no ordinary powers of endurance between the chief members of the party and the Prime Minister's private secretary, who was at first, so ran the report, supposed to be a wild Irishman, whose real name was O'Bourke, and whose brogue seemed to require the allegation that its owner was a popish emissary. It is satisfactory to notice how from the very first Burke's intellectual pre-eminence, character, and aims were clearly admitted and most cheerfully recognised by his political and social superiors; and in the long correspondence in which he engaged with most of them, there is not a trace to be found, on one side or the other, of anything approaching to either patronage or servility. Burke advises them, exhorts them, expostulates with them, condemns their aristocratic languor, fans their feeble flames, drafts their motions, dictates their protests, visits their houses, and generally supplies them with facts, figures, poetry, and romance. To all this they submit with much humility. The Duke of Richmond once indeed ventured to hint to Burke, with exceeding delicacy, that he (the Duke) had a small private estate to attend to as well as public affairs; but the validity of the excuse was not admitted. The part Burke played for the next fifteen years with relation to the Rockingham party reminds me of the functions I have observed performed in lazy families by a soberly clad and eminently respectable person who pays them domiciliary visits, and, having admission everywhere,

goes about mysteriously from room to room, winding up all the clocks. This is what Burke did for the Rockingham party—he kept it going.

But fortunately for us, Burke was not content with private adjuration, or even public speech. His literary instincts, his dominating desire to persuade everybody that he, Edmund Burke, was absolutely in the right, and every one of his opponents hopelessly wrong, made him turn to the pamphlet as a propaganda, and in his hands

> The thing became a trumpet, whence he blew
> Soul-animating strains.

So accustomed are we to regard Burke's pamphlets as specimens of our noblest literature, and to see them printed in comfortable volumes, that we are apt to forget that in their origin they were but the children of the pavement, the publications of the hour. If, however, you ever visit any old public library, and grope about a little, you are likely enough to find a shelf holding some twenty-five or thirty musty, ugly little books, usually lettered "Burke," and on opening any of them you will come across one of Burke's pamphlets as originally issued, bound up with the replies and counter-pamphlets it occasioned. I have frequently tried, but always in vain, to read these replies, which are pretentious enough—usually the works of deans, members of Parliament, and other dignitaries of the class Carlyle used compendiously to describe as "shovel-hatted"—and each of whom was as much entitled to publish pamphlets as Burke himself. There are some things it is very easy to do, and to write a pamphlet is one of them; but to write such a pamphlet as future generations

will read with delight is perhaps the most difficult feat in literature. Milton, Swift, Burke, and Sydney Smith are, I think, our only great pamphleteers.

I have now rather more than kept my word so far as Burke's pre-parliamentary life is concerned, and will proceed to mention some of the circumstances that may serve to account for the fact that when the Rockingham party came into power for the second time in 1782, Burke, who was their life and soul, was only rewarded with a minor office. First, then, it must be recorded sorrowfully of Burke that he was always desperately in debt, and in this country no politician under the rank of a baronet can ever safely be in debt. Burke's finances are, and always have been, marvels and mysteries; but one thing must be said of them that the malignity of his enemies, both Tory enemies and Radical enemies, has never succeeded in formulating any charge of dishonesty against him that has not been at once completely pulverised, and shown on the facts to be impossible.[1] Burke's purchase of the estate at Beaconsfield in 1768, only two years after he entered Parliament, consisting as it did of a good house and 1600 acres of land, has puzzled a great many good men—much more than it ever did Edmund Burke. But how

[1] All the difficulties connected with this subject will be found collected, and somewhat unkindly considered, in Mr. Dilke's *Papers of a Critic*, vol. ii. The equity draftsman will be indisposed to attach importance to statements made in a Bill of Complaint filed in Chancery by Lord Verney against Burke fourteen years after the transaction to which it had reference, in a suit which was abandoned after answer put in. But it should be remembered that in those days a party to Chancery proceedings could not be cross-examined, and Burke having by his sworn Answer denied the statements in the Bill of Complaint, Lord Verney had no other course open than to drop the case, unless he had thought fit to amend the original Bill and begin again.

did he get the money? After an Irish fashion—by not getting it at all. Two-thirds of the purchase-money remained on mortgage, and the balance he borrowed; or, as he puts it, "With all I could collect of my own, and by the aid of my friends, I have established a root in the country." That is how Burke bought Beaconsfield, where he lived till his end came; whither he always hastened when his sensitive mind was tortured by the thought of how badly men governed the world; where he entertained all sorts and conditions of men—Quakers, Brahmins (for whose ancient rites he provided suitable accommodation in a green-house), nobles and abbés flying from revolutionary France, poets, painters, and peers; no one of whom ever long remained a stranger to his charm. Burke flung himself into farming with all the enthusiasm of his nature. His letters to Arthur Young on the subject of carrots still tremble with emotion. You all know Burke's *Thoughts on the Present Discontents*. You remember—it is hard to forget—his speech on Conciliation with America, particularly the magnificent passage beginning, "Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom, and a great empire and little minds go ill together." You have echoed back the words in which, in his letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol on the hateful American War, he protests that it was not instantly he could be brought to rejoice when he heard of the slaughter and captivity of long lists of those whose names had been familiar in his ears from his infancy, and you would all join with me in subscribing to a fund which should have for its object the printing and hanging up over every

editor's desk in town and country a subsequent passage from the same letter:

> A conscientious man would be cautious how he dealt in blood. He would feel some apprehension at being called to a tremendous account for engaging in so deep a play without any knowledge of the game. It is no excuse for presumptuous ignorance that it is directed by insolent passion. The poorest being that crawls on earth, contending to save itself from injustice and oppression, is an object respectable in the eyes of God and man. But I cannot conceive any existence under heaven (which in the depths of its wisdom tolerates all sorts of things) that is more truly odious and disgusting than an impotent, helpless creature, without civil wisdom or military skill, bloated with pride and arrogance, calling for battles which he is not to fight, and contending for a violent dominion which he can never exercise. . . .
>
> If you and I find our talents not of the great and ruling kind, our conduct at least is conformable to our faculties. No man's life pays the forfeit of our rashness. No desolate widow weeps tears of blood over our ignorance. Scrupulous and sober in a well-grounded distrust of ourselves, we would keep in the port of peace and security; and perhaps in recommending to others something of the same diffidence, we should show ourselves more charitable to their welfare than injurious to their abilities.

You have laughed over Burke's account of how all Lord Talbot's schemes for the reform of the king's household were dashed to pieces, because the turnspit of the king's kitchen was a Member of Parliament. You have often pondered over that miraculous passage in his speech on the Nabob of Arcot's debts, describing the devastation of the Carnatic by Hyder Ali—a passage which Mr. John Morley says fills the young orator with the same emotions of enthusiasm, emulation, and despair that (according to the same authority) invariably torment the artist who first gazes on *The Madonna* at Dresden, or the figures of *Night* and *Dawn* at Florence. All these things you know, else are you mighty self-denying of your pleasures. But it is just

possible you may have forgotten the following extract from one of Burke's farming letters to Arthur Young:

> One of the grand points in controversy (a controversy indeed chiefly carried on between practice and speculation) is that of *deep ploughing*. In your last volume you seem, on the whole, rather against that practice, and have given several reasons for your judgment which deserve to be very well considered. In order to know how we ought to plough, we ought to know what end it is we propose to ourselves in that operation. The first and instrumental end is to divide the soil; the last and ultimate end, so far as regards the plants, is to facilitate the pushing of the blade upwards, and the shooting of the roots in all the inferior directions. There is further proposed a more ready admission of external influences —the rain, the sun, the air, charged with all those heterogeneous contents, some, possibly all, of which are necessary for the nourishment of the plants. By ploughing deep you answer these ends in a greater mass of the soil. This would seem in favour of deep ploughing as nothing else than accomplishing, in a more perfect manner, those very ends for which you are induced to plough at all. But doubts here arise, only to be solved by experiment. First, is it quite certain that it is good for the ear and grain of farinaceous plants that their roots should spread and descend into the ground to the greatest possible distances and depths? Is there not some limit in this? We know that in timber, what makes one part flourish does not equally conduce to the benefit of all; and that which may be beneficial to the wood, does not equally contribute to the quantity and goodness of the fruit; and, *vice versa*, that what increases the fruit largely is often far from serviceable to the tree. Secondly, is that looseness to great depths, supposing it is useful to one of the species of plants, equally useful to all? Thirdly, though the external influences—the rain, the sun, the air—act undoubtedly a part, and a large part, in vegetation, does it follow that they are equally salutary in any quantities, at any depths? Or that, though it may be useful to diffuse one of these agents as extensively as may be in the earth, that therefore it will be equally useful to render the earth in the same degree pervious to all? It is a dangerous way of reasoning in physics, as well as morals, to conclude, because a given proportion of anything is advantageous, that the double will be quite as good, or that it will be good at all. Neither in the one nor the other is it always true that two and two make four.

This is magnificent, but it is not farming, and you will easily believe that Burke's attempts to

till the soil were more costly than productive. Farming, if it is to pay, is a pursuit of small economies; and Burke was far too Asiatic, tropical, and splendid to have anything to do with small economies. His expenditure, like his rhetoric, was in the "grand style." He belongs to Charles Lamb's great race, "the men who borrow." But indeed it was not so much that Burke borrowed as that men lent. Right-feeling men did not wait to be asked. Dr. Brocklesby, that good physician, whose name breathes like a benediction through the pages of the biographies of the best men of his time, who soothed Dr. Johnson's last melancholy hours, and for whose supposed heterodoxy the dying man displayed so tender a solicitude, wrote to Burke, in the strain of a timid suitor proposing for the hand of a proud heiress, to know whether Burke would be so good as to accept £1000 at once, instead of waiting for the writer's death. Burke felt no hesitation in obliging so old a friend. Garrick, who, though fond of money, was as generous-hearted a fellow as ever brought down a house, lent Burke £1000. Sir Joshua Reynolds, who has been reckoned stingy, by his will left Burke £2000, and forgave him another £2000 which he had lent him. The Marquis of Rockingham by his will directed all Burke's bonds held by him to be cancelled. They amounted to £30,000. Burke's patrimonial estate was sold by him for £4000; and I have seen it stated that he had received altogether from family sources as much as £20,000. And yet he was always poor, and was glad at the last to accept pensions from the Crown in order that he might not leave his

wife a beggar. This good lady survived her illustrious husband twelve years, and seemed as his widow to have some success in paying his bills, for at her death all remaining demands were found to be discharged. For receiving this pension Burke was assailed by the Duke of Bedford, a most pleasing act of ducal fatuity, since it enabled the pensioner, not bankrupt of his wit, to write a pamphlet, now of course a cherished classic, and introduce into it a few paragraphs about the House of Russell and the cognate subject of grants from the Crown. But enough of Burke's debts and difficulties, which I only mention because all through his life they were cast up against him. Had Burke been a moralist of the calibre of Charles James Fox, he might have amassed a fortune large enough to keep up half-a-dozen Beaconsfields, by simply doing what all his predecessors in the office he held, including Fox's own father, the truly infamous first Lord Holland, had done—namely, by retaining for his own use the interest on all balances of the public money from time to time in his hands as Paymaster of the Forces. But Burke carried his passion for good government into actual practice, and, cutting down the emoluments of his office to a salary (a high one, no doubt), effected a saving to the country of some £25,000 a year, every farthing of which might have gone without remark into his own pocket.

Burke had no vices, save of style and temper; nor was any of his expenditure a profligate squandering of money. It all went in giving employment or disseminating kindness. He sent the painter Barry to study art in Italy. He saved the poet

Crabbe from starvation and despair, and thus secured to the country one who owns the unrivalled distinction of having been the favourite poet of the three greatest intellectual factors of the age (scientific men excepted) — Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott, and Cardinal Newman. Yet so distorted are men's views that the odious and anti-social excesses of Fox at the gambling-table are visited with a blame usually wreathed in smiles, whilst the financial irregularities of a noble and pure-minded man are thought fit matter for the fiercest censure or the most lordly contempt.

Next to Burke's debts, some of his companions and intimates did him harm and injured his consequence. His brother Richard, in Goldsmith's words "so provoking a devil" that it was perhaps easy to forgive his gambling propensities. Then there was another Mr. Burke, who was no relation, but none the less was always about, and to whom it was not safe to lend money. Burke's son, too, whose death he mourned so pathetically, seems to have been a failure, and is described by a candid friend as a nauseating person. To have a decent following is important in politics.

A third reason must be given: Burke's judgment of men and things was often both wrong and violent. The story of Powell and Bembridge, two knaves in Burke's own office, whose cause he espoused, and whom he insisted on reinstating in the public service after they had been dismissed, and maintaining them there, in spite of all protests, till the one had the grace to cut his throat, and the other was sentenced by the Queen's Bench to a term of imprisonment and a heavy fine, is too long to be told,

though it makes interesting reading in the twenty-second volume of Howell's *State Trials*, where at the end of the report is to be found the following note:

> The proceedings against Messrs. Powell and Bembridge occasioned much animated discussion in the House of Commons, in which Mr. Burke warmly supported the accused. The compassion which on these and all other occasions was manifested by Mr. Burke for the sufferings of those public delinquents, the zeal with which he advocated their cause, and the eagerness with which he endeavoured to extenuate their criminality, have received severe reprehension, and in particular when contrasted with his subsequent conduct in the prosecution of Mr. Hastings.

The real reason for Burke's belief in Bembridge is, I think, to be found in the evidence Burke gave on his behalf at the trial before Lord Mansfield. Bembridge had rendered Burke invaluable assistance in carrying out his reforms at the Paymaster's Office, and Burke was constitutionally unable to believe that a rogue could be on his side; but, indeed, Burke was too apt to defend bad causes with a scream of passion, and a politician who screams is never likely to occupy a commanding place in the House of Commons. A last reason for Burke's exclusion from high office is to be found in his aversion to any measure of Parliamentary Reform. An ardent reformer like the Duke of Richmond—the then Duke of Richmond—who was in favour of annual parliaments, universal suffrage, and payment of members, was not likely to wish to associate himself too closely with a politician who wept with emotion at the bare thought of depriving Old Sarum of parliamentary representation.

These reasons account for Burke's exclusion, and jealous as we naturally and properly are of genius

being snubbed by mediocrity, my reading at all events does not justify me in blaming anyone but the Fates for the circumstance that Burke was never a Secretary of State. And after all, does it matter much what he was? Burke no doubt occasionally felt his exclusion a little hard; but he is the victor who remains in possession of the field; and Burke is now, for us and for all coming after us, in such possession.

It now only remains for me, drawing upon my stock of assurance, to essay the analysis of the essential elements of Burke's mental character, and I therefore at once proceed to say that it was Burke's peculiarity and his glory to apply the imagination of a poet of the first order to the facts and the business of life. Arnold says of Sophocles:

> He saw life steadily, and saw it whole.

Substitute for the word "life" the words "organised society," and you get a peep into Burke's mind. There was a catholicity about his gaze. He knew how the whole world lived. Everything contributed to this: his vast desultory reading; his education, neither wholly academical nor entirely professional; his long years of apprenticeship in the service of knowledge; his wanderings up and down the country; his vast conversational powers; his enormous correspondence with all sorts of people; his unfailing interest in all pursuits, trades, manufactures,—all helped to keep before him, like motes dancing in a sunbeam, the huge organism of modern society, which requires for its existence and for its development the maintenance of credit and of order. Burke's imagination led him to look out over the whole land: the legislator

devising new laws, the judge expounding and enforcing old ones, the merchant despatching his goods and extending his credit, the banker advancing the money of his customers upon the credit of the merchant, the frugal man slowly accumulating the store which is to support him in old age, the ancient institutions of Church and University with their seemly provisions for sound learning and true religion, the parson in his pulpit, the poet pondering his rhymes, the farmer eyeing his crops, the painter covering his canvases, the player educating the feelings. Burke saw all this with the fancy of a poet, and dwelt on it with the eye of a lover. But love is the parent of fear, and none knew better than Burke how thin is the lava layer between the costly fabric of society and the volcanic heats and destroying flames of anarchy. He trembled for the fair frame of all established things, and to his horror saw men, instead of covering the thin surface with the concrete, digging in it for abstractions, and asking fundamental questions about the origin of society, and why one man should be born rich and another poor. Burke was no prating optimist: it was his very knowledge how much could be said against society that quickened his fears for it. There is no shallower criticism than that which accuses Burke in his later years of apostasy from so-called Liberal opinions. Burke was all his life through a passionate maintainer of the established order of things, and a ferocious hater of abstractions and metaphysical politics. The same ideas that explode like bombs through his diatribes against the French Revolution are to be found shining with a mild effulgence

in the comparative calm of his earlier writings. I have often been struck with a resemblance, which I hope is not wholly fanciful, between the attitude of Burke's mind towards government and that of Cardinal Newman towards religion. Both these great men belong, by virtue of their imaginations, to the poetic order, and they both are to be found dwelling with amazing eloquence, detail, and wealth of illustration on the varied elements of society. Both seem as they write to have one hand on the pulse of the world, and to be for ever alive to the throb of its action; and Burke, as he regarded humanity swarming like bees into and out of their hives of industry, is ever asking himself, How are these men to be saved from anarchy? whilst Newman puts to himself the question, How are these men to be saved from atheism? Both saw the perils of free inquiry divorced from practical affairs.

"Civil freedom," says Burke, "is not, as many have endeavoured to persuade you, a thing that lies hid in the depth of abstruse science. It is a blessing and a benefit, not an abstract speculation; and all the just reasoning that can be upon it is of so coarse a texture as perfectly to suit the ordinary capacities of those who are to enjoy and of those who are to defend it."

"Tell men," says Cardinal Newman, "to gain notions of a Creator from His works, and if they were to set about it (which nobody does), they would be jaded and wearied by the labyrinth they were tracing; their minds would be gorged and surfeited by the logical operation. To most men argument makes the point in hand more doubtful and considerably less impressive. After all, man

is not a reasoning animal, he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal."

Burke is fond of telling us that he is no lawyer, no antiquarian, but a plain, practical man; and the Cardinal, in like manner, is ever insisting that he is no theologian—he leaves everything of that sort to the Schools, whatever they may be, and simply deals with religion on its practical side as a benefit to mankind.

If either of these great men has been guilty of intellectual excesses, those of Burke may be attributed to his dread of anarchy, those of Newman to his dread of atheism. Neither of them was prepared to rest content with a scientific frontier, an imaginary line. So much did they dread their enemy, so alive were they to the terrible strength of some of his positions, that they could not agree to dispense with the protection afforded by the huge mountains of prejudice and the ancient rivers of custom. The sincerity of either man can only be doubted by the bigot and the fool.

But Burke, apart from his fears, had a constitutional love for old things, simply because they were old. Anything mankind had ever worshipped, or venerated, or obeyed, was dear to him. I have already referred to his providing his Brahmins with a greenhouse for the purpose of their rites, which he watched from outside with great interest. One cannot fancy Cardinal Newman peeping through a window to see men worshipping false though ancient gods. Warren Hastings's high-handed dealings with the temples and time-honoured if scandalous customs of the Hindoos filled Burke with horror. So, too, he respected Quakers, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists,

and all those whom he called Constitutional Dissenters. He has a fine passage somewhere about Rust, for with all his passion for good government he dearly loved a little rust. In this phase of character he reminds one not a little of another great writer—whose death literature has still reason to deplore—George Eliot; who, in her love for old hedge-rows and barns and crumbling moss-grown walls, was a writer after Burke's own heart, whose novels he would have sat up all night to devour; for did he not deny with warmth Gibbon's statement that he had read all five volumes of *Evelina* in a day? "The thing is impossible," cried Burke; "they took me three days doing nothing else." Now, *Evelina* is a good novel, but *Silas Marner* is a better.

Wordsworth has been called the High Priest of Nature. Burke may be called the High Priest of Order—a lover of settled ways, of justice, peace, and security. His writings are a storehouse of wisdom, not the cheap shrewdness of the mere man of the world, but the noble, animating wisdom of one who has the poet's heart as well as the statesman's brain. Nobody is fit to govern this country who has not drunk deep at the springs of Burke. "Have you read your Burke?" is at least as sensible a question to put to a parliamentary candidate, as to ask him whether he is a total abstainer or a desperate drunkard. Something there may be about Burke to regret, and more to dispute; but that he loved justice and hated iniquity is certain, as also it is that for the most part he dwelt in the paths of purity, humanity, and good sense. May we be found adhering to them!

STERNE

1894

NO less pious a railway director than Sir Edward Watkin once prefaced an oration to the shareholders of one of his numerous undertakings by expressing, in broken accents, the wish that "He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb might deal gently with illustrious personages in their present grievous affliction." The wish was a kind one, and is only referred to here as an illustration of the amazing skill of the author of the phrase quoted in so catching the tone, temper, and style of King James's version, that the words occur to the feeling mind as naturally as any in Holy Writ as the best expression of a sorrowful emotion.

The phrase itself is, indeed, an excellent example of Sterne's genius for pathos. No one knew better than he how to drive words home. George Herbert, in his selection of *Outlandish Proverbs*, to which he subsequently gave the alternate title *Jacula Prudentum*, has the following: "To a close-shorn sheep God gives wind by measure"; but this proverb in that wording would never have succeeded in making the chairman of a railway company believe he had read it somewhere in the Bible. It is the same thought, but the words which convey it stop far short of the heart. A close-shorn sheep will not brook comparison with Sterne's "shorn lamb"; whilst the tender,

compassionate, beneficent "God tempers the wind" makes the original "God gives wind by measure" wear the harsh aspect of a wholly unnecessary infliction.

Sterne is our best example of the plagiarist whom none dare make ashamed. He robbed other men's orchards with both hands; and yet no more original writer than he ever went to press in these isles.

He has been dogged, of course; but, as was befitting in his case, it has been done pleasantly. Sterne's detective was the excellent Dr. Ferriar, of Manchester, whose *Illustrations of Sterne*, first published in 1798, were written at an earlier date for the edification of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. Those were pleasant days, when men of reading were content to give their best thoughts first to their friends and then—ten years afterwards—to the public.

Dr. Ferriar's book is worthy of its subject. The motto on the title-page is delightfully chosen. It is taken from the opening paragraph of Lord Shaftesbury's *Miscellaneous Reflections*: "Peace be with the soul of that charitable and courteous Author who for the common benefit of his fellow-Authors introduced the ingenious way of MISCELLANEOUS WRITING." Here Dr. Ferriar stopped; but I will add the next sentence: "It must be owned that since this happy method was established the Harvest of Wit has been more plentiful and the Labourers more in number than heretofore." Wisely, indeed, did Charles Lamb declare Shaftesbury was not too genteel for him. No pleasanter penance for random thinking can be

devised than spending an afternoon turning over Shaftesbury's three volumes and trying to discover how near he ever did come to saying that "Ridicule was the test of truth."

Dr. Ferriar's happy motto puts the reader in a sweet temper to start with, for he sees at once that the author is no pedantic, soured churl, but a good fellow who is going to make a little sport with a celebrated wit, and show you how a genius fills his larder.

The first thing that strikes you in reading Dr. Ferriar's book is the marvellous skill with which Sterne has created his own atmosphere and characters, in spite of the fact that some of the most characteristic remarks of his characters are, in the language of the Old Bailey, "stolen goods." "'There is no cause but one,' replied my Uncle Toby, 'why one man's nose is longer than another's, but because God pleases to have it so.' 'That is Grangousier's solution,' said my father. 'Tis he,' continued my Uncle Toby, looking up and not regarding my father's interruption, 'who makes us all, and frames and puts us together in such forms and proportions and for such ends as is agreeable to His infinite wisdom.'"

"'Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh'; and if those are not the words of my Uncle Toby, it is idle to believe in anything": and yet we read in Rabelais—as, indeed, Sterne suggests to us we should—"'Pour-quoi,' dit Gargantua, 'est-ce que frère Jean a si beau nez?' 'Parce,' répondit Grangousier, 'qu'ainsi Dieu l'a voulu, lequel nous fait en telle forme et à telle fin selon son divin arbitre, que fait un potier ses vaisseaux.'"

To create a character and to be able to put in his mouth borrowed words which yet shall quiver with his personality is the supreme triumph of the greatest "miscellaneous writer" who ever lived.

Dr. Ferriar's book, after all, but establishes this: that the only author whom Sterne really pillaged is Burton, of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, a now well-known writer, but who in Sterne's time, despite Dr. Johnson's partiality, appears to have been neglected. Sir Walter Scott, an excellent authority on such a point, says, in his *Life of Sterne*, that Dr. Ferriar's essay raised the "*Anatomy of Melancholy* to double price in the book market."

Sir Walter is unusually hard upon Sterne in this matter of the *Anatomy*. But different men, different methods. Sir Walter had his own way of cribbing. Sterne's humorous conception of the character of the elder Shandy required copious illustration from learned sources, and a whole host of examples and whimsicalities, which it would have passed the wit of man to invent for himself. He found these things to his hand in Burton, and, like our first parent, "he scrupled not to eat." It is not easy to exaggerate the extent of his plunder. The well-known chapter with its refrain, "The Lady Baussière rode on," and the chapter on the death of Brother Bobby, are almost, though not altogether, pure Burton.

The general effect of it all is to raise your opinion immensely—of Burton. As for your opinion of Sterne as a man of conduct, is it worth while having one? It is a poor business bludgeoning men who bore the brunt of life a long century ago, and whose sole concern now with the world is to delight it.

Laurence Sterne is not standing for Parliament. "Eliza" has been dead a dozen decades. Nobody covers his sins under the cloak of this particular parson. Our sole business is with *Tristram Shandy* and *The Sentimental Journey*; and if these books are not matters for congratulation and joy, then the pleasures of literature are all fudge, and the whole thing a got-up job of "The Trade" and the hungry crew who go buzzing about it.

Mr. Traill concludes his pleasant *Life of Sterne* in a gloomy vein, which I cannot for the life of me understand. He says: "The fate of Richardson might seem to be close behind him" (Sterne). Even the fate of *Clarissa* is no hard one. She still numbers good intellects, and bears her century lightly. Diderot, as Mr. Traill reminds us, praised her outrageously—but Mr. Ruskin is not far behind; and from Diderot to Ruskin is a good "drive." But *Tristram* is a very different thing from *Clarissa*. I should have said, without hesitation, that it was one of the most popular books in the language. Go where you will amongst men—old and young, undergraduates at the Universities, readers in our great cities, old fellows in the country, judges, doctors, barristers—if they have any tincture of literature about them, they all know their *Shandy* at least as well as their *Pickwick*. What more can be expected? "True Shandeism," its author declares, "think what you will against it, opens the heart and lungs." I will be bound to say Sterne made more people laugh in 1893 than in any previous year; and, what is more, he will go on doing it—"'that is, if it please God,' said my Uncle Toby."

LORD CHESTERFIELD

1906

"BUY good books and read them; the best books are the commonest, and the last editions are always the best, if the editors are not blockheads." So wrote Lord Chesterfield to his son, that highly-favoured and much be-written youth, on March 19th, 1750, and his words have been chosen with great cunning by Mr. Charles Strachey as a motto for his new edition of these famous letters.[1]

The quotation is full of the practical wisdom, but is at the same time—so much, at least, an old book-collector may be allowed to say—a little suggestive of the too-well-defined limitations of their writer's genius and character. Lord Chesterfield is always clear and frequently convincing, yet his wisdom is that of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and not only never points in the direction of the Celestial City, but seldom displays sympathy with any generous emotion or liberal taste. Yet as we have nobody like him in the whole body of our literature, we can welcome even another edition—portable, complete, and cheap—of his letters to his son with as much enthusiasm as is compatible with the graces, and with the maxim, so dear to his lordship's heart, *Nil admirari!*

What, I have often wondered, induced Lord Chesterfield to write this enormously long and

[1] Published by Methuen and Co. in two volumes.

troublesome series of letters to a son who was not even his heir? Their sincerity cannot be called in question. William Wilberforce did not more fervently desire the conversion to God of his infant Samuel than apparently did Lord Chesterfield the transformation of his lumpish offspring into "the all-accomplished man" he wished to have him.

"All this," so the father writes in tones of fervent pleading—"all this you may compass if you please. You have the means, you have the opportunities; employ them, for God's sake, while you may, and make yourself the all-accomplished man I wish to have you. It entirely depends upon the next two years; they are the decisive ones" (Letter CLXXVII.).

It is the very language of an evangelical piety applied to the manufacture of a worldling. But what promoted the anxiety? Was it natural affection—a father's love? If it was, never before or since has that world-wide and homely emotion been so concealed. There is a detestable, a forbidding, an all-pervading harshness of tone throughout this correspondence that seems to banish affection, to murder love. Read Letter CLXXVIII., and judge for yourselves. I will quote a passage:

> The more I love you now from the good opinion I have of you, the greater will be my indignation if I should have reason to change it. Hitherto you have had every possible proof of my affection, because you have deserved it, but when you cease to deserve it you may expect every possible mark of my resentment. To leave nothing doubtful upon this important point, I will tell you fairly beforehand by what rule I shall judge of your conduct—by Mr. Harte's account. . . . If he complains you must be guilty, and I shall not have the least regard for anything you may allege in your own defence.

Ugh! what a father! Lord Chesterfield despised the Gospels, and made little of St. Paul; yet the New Testament could have taught him something concerning the nature of a father's love. His language is repulsive, repugnant, and yet how few fathers have taken the trouble to write 400 educational letters of great length to their sons! All one can say is that Chesterfield's letters are without natural affection.

If affection did not dictate these letters, what did? Could it be ambition? So astute a man as Chesterfield, who was kept well informed as to the impression made by his son, could hardly suppose it likely that the boy would make a name for himself, and thereby confer distinction upon the family of which he was an irregular offshoot. A respectable diplomatic career, with an interval in the House of Commons, was the most that so clear-sighted a man could anticipate for the young Stanhope. Was it literary fame for himself? This, of course, assumes that subsequent publication was contemplated by the writer. The dodges and devices of authors are well-nigh infinite and quite beyond conjecture, and it is, of course, possible that Lord Chesterfield kept copies of these letters, which bear upon their faces evidence of care and elaboration. It is not to be supposed for a moment that he ever forgot he had written them. It is hard to believe he never inquired after them and their whereabouts. Great men have been known to write letters which, though they bore other addresses, were really intended for their biographers. It would not have been surprising if Lord Chesterfield wrote these letters intending

some day to publish them, but not only is there no warrant for such an opinion, but the opposite is clearly established. It is, no doubt, odd that the son should have carefully preserved more than 400 letters written to him during a period beginning with his tenderest years and continuing whilst he was travelling on the Continent. It seems almost a miracle. What made the son treasure them so carefully? Did he look forward to being his father's biographer? Hardly so at the age of ten, or even twenty. Biographies were not then what they have since become. No doubt in the middle of the eighteenth century letters were more treasured than they are to-day, and young Stanhope's friends may also have thought it wise to encourage him to preserve documentary evidence of the great interest taken in him by his father. None the less, I think the preservation of this correspondence is in the circumstances a most extraordinary though well-established fact.

The son died in 1708 of a dropsy at Avignon, and the news was communicated to the Earl by his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Eugenia Stanhope, of whose existence he was previously unaware. Two grandsons accompanied her. It was a shock; but "les manières nobles et aisees, la tournure d'un homme de condition, le ton de la bonne compagnie, les grâces, le je ne sçais quoi qui plait," came to Lord Chesterfield's assistance, and he received his son's widow, who was not a pleasing person, and her two boys with kindness and good feeling, and provided for them quite handsomely by his will. The Earl died in 1773, in his seventy-ninth year, and thereupon Mrs. Stanhope, who was in posses-

sion of all the original letters addressed to her late husband, carried her wares to market, and made a bargain with Mr. Dodsley for their publication, she to receive £1575. Mr. Dodsley advertised the forthcoming work, and on that the Earl's executors, relying upon the well-known case of Pope *v.* Curl, decided by Lord Hardwicke in 1741, filed their bill against Mrs. Stanhope, seeking an injunction to restrain publication. The widow put in her sworn Answer, in which she averred that she had, on more occasions than one, mentioned publication to the Earl, and that he, though recovering from her certain written characters of eminent contemporaries, had seemed quite content to let her do what she liked with the letters, only remarking that there was too much Latin in them. The executors seem to have moved for what is called an interim injunction—that is, an injunction until trial of the cause, and, from the report in *Ambler*, it appears that Lord Apsley (a feeble creature) granted such an injunction, but recommended the executors to permit the publication if, on seeing a copy of the correspondence, they saw no objection to it. In the result the executors gave their consent, and the publication became an authorised one, so much so that Dodsley was able to obtain an interdict in the Scotch Court preventing a certain Scotch bookseller, called McFarquhar, from reprinting the letters in Edinburgh.

Whether the executors believed Mrs. Stanhope's story, or saw no reason to object to the publication of the letters, I do not know, but it is clear that the opposition was a half-hearted one.

It would be hasty to assume that Lord Chester-

field wrote these letters with any intention of publication, and I am therefore left without being able to suggest any strong reason for their existence. A restless, itching pen, perhaps, accounts for them. Some men find a pleasure in writing, even at great length; others, of whom Carlyle was one, though they hate the labour, are yet compelled by some fierce necessity to blacken paper.

At all events, we have Lord Chesterfield's letters, and, having them, they will always have readers, for they are readable.

That the letters are full of wit and wisdom and sound advice is certain. Mr. Strachey, in his preface, seems to be under the impression that in the popular estimate Chesterfield is reckoned an elegant trifler, a man of no serious account. What the popular or vulgar estimate of Chesterfield may be it would be hard to determine, nor is it of the least importance, for no one who knows about Lord Chesterfield can possibly entertain any such opinion. How it came about that so able and ambitious a man made so poor a thing out of life, and failed so completely, is puzzling at first, though a little study would, I think, make the reasons of Chesterfield's failure plain enough.

To prove by extracts from the Letters how wise a man Chesterfield was would be easy, but tiresome; to exhibit him in a repulsive character would be equally easy, but spiteful. I prefer to leave him alone, and to content myself with but one quotation, which has a touch of both wisdom and repulsiveness:

> Consult your reason betimes. I do not say it will always prove an unerring guide, for human reason is not infallible,

but it will prove the least erring guide that you can follow. Books and conversation may assist it, but adopt neither blindly and implicitly; try both by that best rule God has given to direct us—reason. Of all the truths do not decline that of thinking. The host of mankind can hardly be said to think; their prejudices are almost all adoptive; and in general I believe it is better that it should be so, as such common prejudices contribute more to order and quiet than their own separate reasonings would do, uncultivated as they are. We have many of these useful prejudices in this country which I should be very sorry to see removed. The good Protestant conviction that the Pope is both Antichrist and the Whore of Babylon is a more effectual preservative against Popery than all the solid and unanswerable arguments of Chillingworth.

SAMUEL RICHARDSON

A LECTURE

1892

IT is difficult to describe mankind either in a book or in a breath, and none but the most determined of philosophers or the most desperate of cynics have attempted to do so, either in one way or the other. Neither the philosophers nor the cynics can be said to have succeeded. The descriptions of the former are not recognisable, and therefore, as descriptions at all events, whatever may be their other merits, must be pronounced failures; whilst those of the cynics describe something which bears to ordinary human nature only the same sort of resemblance that chemically polluted waters bear to the stream as it flows higher up than the source of contamination, which in this case is the cynic himself.

But though it is hard to describe mankind, it is easy to distinguish between people. You may do this in a great many different ways: for example, and to approach my subject, there are those who can read Richardson's novels, and those who cannot. The inevitable third-class passenger, no doubt, presents himself and clamours for a ticket: I mean the man or woman who has never tried. But even a lecturer should have courage, and I say boldly that I provide no accommodation for that person

to-night. If he feels aggrieved, let him seek his remedy—elsewhere.

Mr. Samuel Richardson, of Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, printer, was, if you have only an eye for the outside, a humdrum person enough. Witlings, writing about him in the magazines, have often, out of consideration for their pretty little styles, and in order to avoid the too frequent repetition of his highly respectable if unromantic name, found it convenient to dub him the "little printer."

He undoubtedly was short of stature, and, in later life, obese in figure, but had he stood seven feet high in his stockings, these people would never have called him the "big printer." Richardson has always been exposed to a strong under-current of ridicule. I have known people to smile at the mention of his name, as if he were a sort of man-milliner—or, did the thing exist, as some day it may do, a male nursery governess. It is at first difficult to account for this strange colouring of the bubble reputation. Richardson's life, admirable as is Mrs. Barbauld's sketch, cannot be said to have been written; his letters—those, I mean, he wrote in his own name, not the nineteen volumes he made his characters write—have not been reprinted for more than eighty years. He of all men might be suffered to live only in his works, and when we turn to those works, what do we find? *Pamela* and *Clarissa* are both terribly realistic; they contain passages of horror, and are in parts profoundly pathetic, whilst *Clarissa* is desperately courageous. Fielding, with all his swagger and bounce, gold lace and strong language, has no more of the boldness

than he has of the sublimity of the historian of Clarissa Harlowe. But these qualities avail poor Richardson nothing. The taint of afternoon tea still clings to him. The facts—the harmless, nay, I will say the attractive, facts—that he preferred the society of ladies to that of his own sex, and liked to be surrounded by these, surely not strange creatures, in his gardens and grottos, first at North End, Hammersmith, and afterwards at Parson's Green, are still remembered against him. Life is indeed full of pitfalls, if estimates of a man's genius are to be formed by the garden-parties he gave, and the tea he consumed a century and a quarter ago. The real truth I believe to be this: we are annoyed with Richardson because he violates a tradition. The proper place for an eighteenth-century novelist was either the pot- or the sponging-house. He ought to be either disguised in liquor or confined for debt. Richardson was never the one or the other. Let us see how this works: take Dr. Johnson; we all know how to describe him. He is our great moralist, the sturdy, the severe, the pious, the man who, as Carlyle puts it in his striking way, worshipped at St. Clement Danes in the era of Voltaire, or, as he again puts it, was our real primate, the true spiritual edifier and soul's teacher of all England. Well, here is one of his reminiscences: "I remember writing to Richardson from a sponging-house, and was so sure of my deliverance through his kindness and liberality, that before his reply was brought I knew I could afford to joke with the rascal who had me in custody, and did so over a pint of adulterated wine for which at that moment I had no money to pay."

Now, there we have the true, warm-hearted literary tradition of the eighteenth century. It is very amusing, it is full of good feeling and fellowship, but the morality of the transaction from the great moralist's point of view is surely, like his linen, a trifle dingy. The soul's teacher of all England, laid by the heels in a sponging-house, and cracking jokes with a sheriff's officer over a pint of wine on the chance of another man paying for it, is a situation which calls for explanation. It is not my place to give it. It could, I think, easily be given. Dr. Johnson was, in my judgment, all Carlyle declared him to be, and to have been called upon to set him free was to be proudly privileged, and, after all, why make such a fuss about trifles? The debt and costs together only amounted to £5 18s., so that the six guineas Richardson promptly sent more than sufficed to get our "real primate" out of prison, and to pay for the pint. All I feel concerned to say here is, that the praise of this anecdote belongs to the little printer, and not to the great lexicographer. The hero of the parable of the Good Samaritan is the Good Samaritan himself, and not the unfortunate, and therefore probably foolish, traveller who must need fall amongst thieves.

But if you violate traditions, and disturb people's notions as to what it is becoming for you to be, to do, or to suffer, you have to pay for it. An eighteenth-century novelist who made a fortune first by honest labour and the practice of frugality, and wrote his novels afterwards; who was fond of the society of ladies, and a vegetarian in later life; who divided his time between his shop and his

villa, and became in due course master of a city company, is not what we have a right to expect, and makes a figure which strongly contrasts with that of Richardson's great contemporary, the entirely manly Henry Fielding, whose very name rings in the true tradition; whilst as for his books, to take up *Tom Jones* is like re-entering in middle life your old college rooms, where, so at least Oliver Wendell Holmes assures us,

> You feel o'er you stealing
> The old, familiar, warm, champagny, brandy-punchy feeling.

It may safely be said of Richardson that, after attaining to independence, he did more good every week of his life—for he was a wise and most charitable man—than Fielding was ever able to do throughout the whole of his; but this cannot alter the case, or excuse a violated tradition.

The position, therefore, of Richardson in our literature is that of a great Nonconformist. He was not manufactured according to any established process. If I may employ a metaphor borrowed from his own most honourable craft, he was set up in a new kind of type. He was born in 1689 in a Derbyshire village, the name of which, for some undiscovered reason, he would never tell. The son of poor parents—his father was a joiner—he had never any but a village school education, nor did he in later life worry much about learning, or seek, as so many printers have done, to acquire foreign tongues. At fourteen years of age he was bound apprentice to a printer in Aldersgate Street, and for seven years toiled after a fashion which would certainly nowadays be forbidden by Act of Parliament, were there the least likelihood of anybody

either demanding or performing drudgery so severe. When out of his apprenticeship, he worked for eight years as a compositor, reader, and overseer, and then, marrying his late master's daughter, set up for himself, and slowly but steadily grew prosperous and respected. His first wife dying, he married again, the daughter of a bookseller of Bath. At the age of fifty he published his first novel, *Pamela*. John Bunyan's life was not more unlike an Archbishop of Canterbury's than was Richardson's unlike the life of an ordinary English novelist of his period.

This simile to Nonconformity also holds good a little when we seek to ascertain the ambit of Richardson's popularity. To do this we must take wide views. We must not confine our attention to what may be called the high and dry school of literary orthodoxy. There, no doubt, Richardson has his admirers, just as Spurgeon's sermons have been seen peeping out from under a heap of archidiaconal, and even episcopal Charges, although the seat of Spurgeon's popularity is not in bishops' palaces, but in shop parlours. I do not mean by this that Richardson is now a popular novelist, for the fact, I suppose, is otherwise; but I mean that to take the measure of his popularity you must look over the wide world and not merely at the clans and the cliques, the noble army of writers and the ever lessening body of readers, who together constitute what are called literary circles. Of Richardson's great fame on the Continent, it will be time enough to speak in a few minutes; for the moment I will stop at home. Mr. Leslie Stephen, who has been called to be editor of our first really

great Dictionary of National Biography, and has in that capacity to sit like a coroner's jury upon every dead author, and to decide whether his exploits are to be squeezed into one miserable paragraph, or may be allowed proudly to expand over a page—he, I say, pronounces *Pamela* to be neither moral nor amusing. Pamela, who through four mortal volumes thinks of nothing but her virtue and how to get married according to law! to be thus dismissed by her most recent, most distinguished editor! But, I repeat, we must take wide views. We must not be content with the verdict of the university; we must seek that of the kitchen: nor is the distance ever great between these institutions. Two months ago a cook in a family of my acquaintance, one Saturday evening, when like old Caspar "her work was done," suddenly bethought herself of *Pamela*, a book she had not read since girlhood. Rest was impossible —get it forthwith she must. The housemaid proffered her *The Heir of Redclyffe*, and the kitchenmaid, a somewhat oppressed damsel, timidly produced *Gates Ajar*. The cook was not to be trifled with after any such feeble fashion. The spell of *Pamela* was upon her, and out she sallied, arrayed in her majesty, to gratify her soul's desire. Had she been a victim of what is called "Higher Education of Women," and therefore in the habit of frequenting orthodox bookshops, she would doubtless have found the quest at so late an hour as hopeless as that of the Holy Grail; but she was not that sort of person, and the shop she had in her mind, and whither she straightway bent her steps, was a small stationer's where are vended

Family Heralds and *Ballads* and *Pamelas*; for the latter, in cheap sixpenny guise—and I hope complete, but for this I cannot vouch—is a book which is constantly reprinted for sale amongst the poor. The cook, having secured her prize, returned home in triumph, nor was a dinner worthy of the name to be had until Pamela's virtue was rewarded, which, as you doubtless remember, it only was when her master brings her a licence and presses for a day. She desires it may be on a Thursday, and gives her reasons. He rallies her agreeably on that head. The Thursday following is fixed upon. She reflects seriously on the near prospect of her important change of condition, and is diffident of her own worthiness, and prays for humility that her new condition may not be a snare to her, and makes up her mind how to behave herself to the servants, she herself having been one.

There are well-authenticated instances of the extraordinary power *Pamela* possesses of affecting those who are not much in the habit of reading. There is a story of its being read aloud by a blacksmith round his anvil night after night, to a band of eager rustics, all dreadfully anxious good Mr. Richardson would only move on a little faster, and yet unwilling to miss a single one of poor Pamela's misadventures; and of their greeting by hearty rounds of British cheers the happy issue out of her afflictions that awaits her, namely, her marriage with the cause of every one of them.

There are living writers who have written some admirable novels, and I have known people to be glad when they were finished, but never to the pitch of three times three.

I am not, of course, recommending anyone to read *Pamela*; to do so would be an impertinence. You have all done so, or tried to do so. "I do not remember," says Charles Lamb, "a more whimsical surprise than having been once detected by a familiar damsel, reclining at my ease upon the grass on Primrose Hill, reading *Pamela*. There was nothing in the book to make a man seriously ashamed at the exposure; but as she seated herself down by me, and seemed determined to read in company, I could have wished it had been—any other book. We read on very socially for a few pages; and not finding the author much to her taste, she got up and went away. Gentle casuist, I leave it to thee to conjecture whether the blush (for there was one between us) was the property of the nymph or the swain in the dilemma. From me you shall never learn the secret." [1]

Miss Pamela Andrews was, to tell the truth, a vulgar young person. There is nothing heroic or romantic about her; she has not a touch or a trace of the moral sublimity of Jeannie Deans, who, though of the same rank of life, belonged to another country and had had an entirely different up-bringing. What a reply was that of Jeannie's to the Rev. Mr. Staunton, George Robertson's father, when he, entirely misapprehending the purport of her famous journey, lets her perceive that he fancies she is plotting for her own marriage with his son. Says the father to the son: "Perhaps you intend to fill up the cup of disobedience and profligacy by forming a low and disgraceful marriage; but let me bid you beware."

[1] *Last Essays of Elia*, 52.

" If you were feared for sic a thing happening with me, sir," said Jeannie, " I can only say that not for all the land that lies between the twa ends of the rainbow wad I be the woman that should wed your son." " There is something very singular in all this," said the elder Staunton; and so Pamela would have thought. She, honest girl that she was, was always ready to marry anybody's son, only she must have the marriage lines to keep in her desk and show to her dear parents.

The book's origin ought not to be overlooked. Some London booksellers, knowing Mr. Richardson to be a grave man of decorous life, and with a talent for moralising, desired him to write a series of familiar letters on the behaviour of young women going out to service for the first time; they never intended a novel: they wanted a manual of conduct—that conduct which, according to a precise arithmetician, is three-fourths, or some other fraction, of human life. It was in this spirit that Richardson sat down to write *Pamela* and make himself famous. He had a facile pen, and the book, as it grew under his hand, outstripped its design, but never lost sight of it. It was intended for Pamelas, and is *bourgeois* to the very last degree. The language is simple, but its simplicity is not the noble, soul-stirring simplicity of Bunyan, nor is it the manly simplicity of Cobbett, or Hugh Miller: it is the ignoble, and, at times, almost the odious, simplicity of a merely uncultured life. It abounds in vulgar phrases and vulgar thoughts; still, it reflects powerfully the scenes it portrays, and you feel as you read a fine affinity between the communicating medium, the language, and the

thing communicated, the story. When people said, in the flush of their first enthusiasm, as they did say, that there were but two good books in the world, the Bible and *Pamela*, this is what, perhaps unconsciously, they were thinking of; otherwise they were talking nonsense. Pamela spoke a language still understood of many, and if she was not romantic or high-flown, there are others like her. We are always well pleased, and it is perhaps lucky for the majority of novelists that it should be so, to read about people who do not in the least bit resemble us; still, anyone who describes us as we are, "strikes the electric chain wherewith we are darkly bound," and makes humanity quiver right down the centuries. Pamela was a vulgar little thing, and saucy withal: her notions of honour and dishonour were neither lofty nor profound; but she had them, and stuck to them in perilous paths along which the defenceless of her sex are too often called to tread; and when finally her virtue is rewarded, and she is driven off in a chariot drawn by the four long-tailed mares upon whom she had been cruelly twitted for setting her affections, I for one am quite prepared to join with the rustics round the blacksmith's anvil in loud cheers for Pamela.

Ten years after *Pamela* came *Clarissa*. It is not too much to say that not only Great Britain and Ireland (the latter country not yet deprived of her liberties by the Act of Union, and therefore in a position to pirate popular authors, after the agreeable fashion of our American cousins[1]), but also France, Germany, and Holland, simply gulped

[1] Since abandoned. *Laus Deo!*

Clarissa down; and she was in seven volumes. It was a kind of gospel, something good and something new. Its author was a stout tradesman of sixty, but he was not in the very least degree what is now called—perhaps to the point of nausea—a Philistine. By a Philistine I suppose we must understand someone who lives and moves and has his being in the realm of ordinary stock conventional ideas—a man who is as blind to the future as he is deaf to the past. For example, that Dr. Drummond, Archbishop of York, who just about this very time told the Rev. Mr. Conyers, one of his clergy, "that he would be better employed preaching the morality of Socrates than canting about the New Birth," was a Philistine—I doubt not a very amiable one, but, being a Philistine, he had no chance of recognising what this nascent methodism was, and as for dreaming what it might become—had he been capable of this—he would not have been a Philistine or, probably, Archbishop of York!

Richardson, on the other hand, had his quiver full of new ideas; he had his face to the east; he was no mere inheritor, he was a progenitor. He is, in short, as has been often said, our Rousseau; his characters were not stock characters. Think of Fielding's characters, his Tom Joneses and Booths, his Amelias and Sophias. They are stage properties as old as the Plantagenets. They are quite unidea'd, if I may use a word which, as applied to girls, has the authority of Dr. Johnson. Fielding's men are either good fellows with large appetites, which they gratify openly, or sneaks with equally large appetites, which they gratify on the sly; whilst the

characters of his women are made to hinge solely upon their willingness or unwillingness to turn a blind eye. If they are ready to do this, they are angels; Sophia comes upon the stage in a chapter headed "A short hint of what we can do in the sublime, and a description of Miss Sophia Western." Poor neglected Amelia, whenever she is forgiving her husband, is described as "all one blaze of beauty"; but if they are not willing to play this rôle, why then they are unsexed and held up to the ridicule and reprobation of all good fellows and pretty women. This sort of thing was abhorrent to the soul of the little printer; he hated Fielding's boisterous drunkards with an entire hatred. I believe he would have hated them almost as much if Fielding had not been a rival of his fame. He said he was not able to read any more than the first volume of *Amelia*, and as for *Tom Jones*, in the year 1750, he was audacious enough to say that its run was over. Regarded merely as writers, there can, I suppose, be no real rivalry between Fielding and Richardson. The superiority of Fielding is apparent on every page. Wit, good-humour, a superb lusty style which carries you along like a pair of horses over a level moorland road, incidents, adventures, inns, and all the glory of motion, high spirits, huge appetites, pretty women—what a catalogue it makes; of things no doubt smacking of this world and the kingdom thereof, but none the less delightful on that account! No wonder *Tom Jones* is still running; where, I should like to know, is the man bold enough to stop him? But for all this, Richardson was the more remarkable and really interesting man of the two; and for the

reason that he was the evangelist of the new sentimentalism, that word which so puzzled one of his most charming correspondents, that she wrote to ask him what it meant—this new word sentimental which was just beginning to be in everybody's mouth. We have heard a good deal of it since.

Clarissa Harlowe has a place not merely amongst English novels, but amongst English women.

It was a new thing for a woman to be described as being not only in herself but by herself commendable and altogether lovely, as triumphing in her own right over the cruelest dishonour, and rejecting, with a noble scorn new to literature, the hand in marriage of the villain who had done her wrong. The book opened the flood-gates of human tears. The waters covered the earth. We cannot weep as they used to do in " the brave days of old."

Listen to the wife of a Lancashire baronet: " I verily believe I have shed a pint of tears, my heart is still bursting though they cease not to flow at this moment, nor will I fear for some time. . . . Had you seen me I surely should have moved your pity. When alone in agonies would I lay down the book, take it up again, walk about the room, let fall a flood of tears, wipe my eyes, read again, perhaps not three lines, throw away the book, crying out: ' Excuse me, good Mr. Richardson, I cannot go on; it is your fault, you have done more than I can bear '; threw myself upon my couch to compose; again I read, again I acted the same part, sometimes agreeably interrupted by my dear man, who was at that time labouring through the sixth volume with a heart capable of impressions equal to my own—tho' the effects shown in

a more justifiable manner—which I believe may be compared to what Mr. Belfort felt when he found the beauteous sufferer in her prison-room. Something rose in my throat, I knew not what, which made me guggle as it were for speech."

Nor did the men escape; a most grave and learned man writes:

> That *Pamela* and *Clarissa* have again "obtained the *honour* of my perusal," do you say, my dear Mr. Richardson? I assure you I think it an *honour* to be able to say I have read, and as long as I have eyes will read, all your three most excellent *pieces* at least once a year, that I am capable of doing it with increasing pleasure which is perpetually doubled by the reflection, that this good man, this charming author, is *my friend*. I have been this day weeping over the seventh volume of *Clarissa* as if I had attended her dying bed and assisted at her funeral procession. Oh, may my latter end be like hers!

It is no wonder the author of *Clarissa* had soon a great correspondence with ladies, married and single, young and old, virtuous and the reverse. Had he not written seven volumes, all about a girl? had he not made her beautiful, wise and witty, and learned withal? had he not depicted with extraordinary skill the character of the fascinating—the hitherto resistless Lovelace, who, though accomplishing Clarissa's ruin, does thereby but establish her triumph and confound himself? It is no doubt unhappily the case that far too many of Richardson's fair correspondents lacked the splendid courage of their master, and to his infinite annoyance fell in love with his arch-scamp, and prayed his creator that Lovelace might first be led to see the error of his ways, and then to the altar with the divine Clarissa. But the heroic printer was adamant to their cries, and he was

right if ever man was. As well might *King Lear* end happily as *Clarissa Harlowe*.

The seven volumes caused immense talk and discussion, and it was all Clarissa, Clarissa, Clarissa. Sophia Western was, as we have seen, a comely girl enough, but she was as much like Clarissa as a ship in dock is like a ship at sea and on fire. What can you find to say of her, or to her?[1] When you have dug Tom Jones in the ribs, and called him a lucky dog, and wished her happy, you turn away with a yawn; but Clarissa is immense. Do you remember Thackeray's account in the *Roundabout Papers* of Macaulay's rhapsody in the Athenæum Club? "I spoke to him once about *Clarissa*. 'Not read *Clarissa*?' he cried out. 'If you have once thoroughly entered on *Clarissa* and are infected by it, you can't leave off. When I was in India I passed one hot season at the hills, and there were the governor-general, the secretary of government, the commander-in-chief, and their wives. I had *Clarissa* with me, and as soon as they began to read the whole station was in a passion of excitement about Miss Harlowe and her misfortunes, and her scoundrelly Lovelace. The governor's wife seized the book, and the secretary waited for it, and the chief justice could not read it for tears.' He acted the whole scene, he paced up and down the Athenæum Library. I dare say he could have spoken pages of the book, of that book, and of what countless piles of others."

I must be permitted to observe that lawyers

[1] Richardson in a letter says this of her, "the weak, the insipid, the runaway, the inn-frequenting Sophia"; and calls her lover "her illegitimate Tom." But nobody else need say this of Sophia; and as for Tom, he was declared to be a foundling from the first.

have been great Richardsonians. The Rev. Mr. Loftus, writing to our author from Ireland, says: "I will tell you a story about your sweet girl Pamela. Our late lord-chancellor,[1] who was a man more remarkable for the goodness of his heart than even for the abilities of his head, which were of the most exalted kind, was so struck with her history that he sat up reading it the whole night, although it was then the middle of term, and declared to his family he could not find it in his heart to quit his book, nor imagined it to be so late by many hours."

The eminent Serjeant Hill, though averse to literature, used to set Clarissa's will before his pupils, and bid them determine how many of its uses and trusts could be supported in court. I am sorry to have to add that in the learned serjeant's opinion poor Clarissa, in addition to all her other misfortunes, died intestate.

All this commotion and excitement and Clarissa-worship meant that something was brewing, and that good Mr. Richardson, with his fat round face flushed with the fire, had his ladle in the pan and was busy stirring it about. What is called the correspondence of Samuel Richardson, which was edited by that admirable woman, Mrs. Barbauld, and published in six volumes in 1804, is mostly made up, not of letters from, but to, the author of *Clarissa*. All the more effectually on that account does it let us into the manufactory of his mind. The letters a man receives are perhaps more significant of his real character than those he writes. People did not write to Mr. Richardson about themselves or about their business, or about

[1] Jocelyn, founder of the Roden peerage.

literature, unless it were to say they did not like *Tom Jones*, or about politics, or other sports, but they wrote to him about himself and his ideas, his good woman, Clarissa, his good man, Sir Charles, and the true relation between the sexes. They are immense fun, these letters, but they ought also to be taken seriously; Mr. Richardson took them as seriously as he always took himself. There was, perhaps, only one subject Richardson regarded as of equal importance with himself, and that was the position of woman. This is why he hated Fielding, the triumphant, orthodox Fielding, to whom man was a rollicking sinner, and woman a loving slave. He pondered on this subject, until the anger within him imparts to his style a virility and piquancy not usually belonging to it. The satire in the following extract from a letter he wrote to the good lady who shed a pint of tears over *Clarissa* is pungent: "Man is an animal that must bustle in the world, go abroad, converse, fight battles, encounter other dangers of seas, winds, and I know not what, in order to protect, provide for, maintain in ease and plenty, women. Bravery, anger, fierceness are made familiar to them. They buffet and are buffeted by the world; are impatient and uncontrollable; they talk of honour, run their heads against stone walls to make good their pretensions to it, and often quarrel with one another and fight duels upon any other silly thing that happens to raise their choler—their shadows, if you please; while women are meek, passive, good creatures, who used to stay at home, set their maids at work, and formerly themselves, get their houses in order to receive, comfort, oblige,

give joy to their fierce, fighting, bustling, active protectors, providers, maintainers, divert him with pretty pug's tricks, tell him soft tales of love, and of who and who's together, what has been done in his absence, bring to him little master, so like his own dear papa, and little pretty miss, a soft, sweet, smiling soul, with her sampler in her hand, so like what her meek mamma was at her years."

You cannot, indeed, lay hold of many specific things which Richardson advocated. Ignorant of the classics himself, he was by no means disposed to advocate the teaching of them to women. Clarissa, indeed, knew Latin, but Harriet Byron did not. The second Mrs. Richardson was just a little bit too much for her husband, and he was consequently led to hold what may be called "high doctrine" as to the duty of wives obeying their husbands. Though never was man less of a revolutionary than Richardson, still he was on the side of the revolution. He had an ethical system different from that which stood beside him. This did not escape the notice of a keen-witted contemporary, the great Smollett, whose own Roderick Randoms and Peregrine Pickles are such unmitigated, high-coloured ruffians as to induce Sir Walter Scott to call him the Rubens of fiction, but who none the less had an eye for the future; he in his history speaks in terms of high admiration of the sublime code of ethics of the author of *Clarissa*. Richardson was fierce against duelling, and also against corporal punishment. He had the courage to deplore the evil effects produced by the works of Homer, "that fierce, fighting *Iliad*," as he called it. We may be sure his children were never

allowed to play with tin soldiers, at least, not with their father's consent.

Having written *Clarissa*, it became inevitable that Richardson should proceed further and write *Grandison*. In reading his correspondence we hail Sir Charles afar off. Richardson had deeply grieved to see how many of his ladies had fallen in love with the scoundrelly Lovelace. It wounded him to the quick, for he could not but feel that he was not in the least like Lovelace himself. He turns almost savagely upon some of his fair correspondents and upbraids them, telling them indeed plainly that he feared they were no better than they should be. They had but one answer: "Ah, dear Mr. Richardson, in *Clarissa* you have shown us the good woman we all would be. Now show us the good man we all should love." And he set about doing so seriously, aye and humbly, too. He writes with a sad sincerity a hundred years cannot hide:

> How shall a man obscurely situated, never in his life delighting in public entertainments, nor in his youth able to frequent them from narrowness of fortune; one of the most attentive of men to the calls of business—his situation for many years producing little but prospects of a numerous family—a business that seldom called him abroad when he might in the course of it see and know a little of the world, as some employments give opportunities to do—naturally shy and sheepish, and wanting more encouragement by smiles to draw him out than anybody thought it worth their while to give him—and blest (in this he will say blest) with a mind that set him above dependence, and making an absolute reliance on Providence and his own endeavours—how, I say, shall such a man pretend to describe and enter into characters in upper life?

However, he set about it, and in 1754 produced *Sir Charles Grandison*, or, as he had originally

intended to call it, the *Good Man*, in six octavo volumes.

I am not going to say he entirely succeeded with his good man, who I know has been called an odious prig. I have read *Sir Charles Grandison* once—I cannot promise ever to read it again, and yet who knows what may happen? Sir Walter Scott, in his delightful, good-humoured fashion, tells a tale of a venerable lady of his acquaintance, who, when she became subject to drowsy fits, chose to have *Sir Charles* read to her as she sat in her elbow chair, in preference to any other work; because, said she, "should I drop asleep in the course of the reading, I am sure when I awake I shall have lost none of the story, but shall find the party where I left them, conversing in the cedar-parlour."

After *Sir Charles*, Richardson wrote no more. Indeed, there was nothing to write about, unless he had taken the advice of a morose clerical friend who wrote to him: "I hope you intend to give us a bad woman—expensive, imperious, lewd, and, at last, a drammer. This is a fruitful and necessary subject which will strike and entertain to a miracle." Mr. Richardson replied jocosely that if the Rev. Mr. Skelton would only sketch the she-devil for him, he would find room for her somewhere, and the subject dropped. The wife of the celebrated German poet, Klopstock, wrote to him in her broken English: "Having finished your *Clarissa* (oh, the heavenly book!) I would prayed you to write the history of a manly *Clarissa*, but I had not courage enough at that time. I should have it no more to-day, as this is only my first English

letter; but I am now Klopstock's wife, and then I was only the single young girl. You have since written the manly *Clarissa* without my prayer. Oh, you have done it to the great joy and thanks of all your happy readers! Now you can write no more. You must write the history of an Angel."

The poor lady died the following year under melancholy circumstances, but her prophecy proved true. Richardson wrote no more. He died in 1761, seventy-two years of age. His will, after directing numerous mourning-rings to be given to certain friends, proceeds as follows: "Had I given rings to all the ladies who have honoured me with their correspondence, and whom I sincerely venerate for their amiable qualities, it would even in this last solemn act appear like ostentation."

It now only remains to say two or three words about Richardson's great popularity abroad. Until quite recently, he and Sterne may be said to have been the only popular English authors abroad; perhaps Goldsmith should be added to the party. Foreigners never felt any difficulty about him, or about the tradition he violated. The celebrated author of *Manon Lescaut* translated *Clarissa* into French, though it was subsequently better done by a less famous hand. She was also turned into German and Dutch. Foreigners, of course, could not be expected to appreciate the hopeless absurdity of a man who lived at Parson's Green attempting to describe the upper classes. Horace Walpole when in Paris did his best to make this plain, but he failed. Say what he might, *Clarissa* lay on the toilet-tables of the French princesses, and everybody was raving about her. Lady Mary Wortley

Montagu was also very angry. "Richardson," says she, writing to the Countess of Bute, "has no idea of the manners of high life. Such liberties as pass between Mr. Lovelace and his cousins are not to be excused by the relation. I should have been much astonished if Lord Denbigh should have offered to kiss me; and I dare swear Lord Trentham never attempted such impertinence to you." To the English reader these criticisms of Lady Mary's have immense value; but the French sentimentalist, with his continental insolence, did not care a sou what impertinences Lord Denbigh and Lord Trentham might or might not have attempted towards their female cousins. He simply read his *Clarissa* and lifted up his voice and wept: and so, to do her justice, did Lady Mary herself. "This Richardson," she writes, "is a strange fellow. I heartily despise him and eagerly read him, nay, sob over his works in a most scandalous manner."

The effect produced upon Rousseau by Richardson is historical. Without *Clarissa* there would have been no *Nouvelle Héloïse*, and had there been no *Nouvelle Héloïse* everyone of us would have been somewhat different from what we are.

The elaborate eulogy of Diderot is well-known, and, though extravagant in parts, is full of true criticism. One sentence only I will quote: "I have observed," he says, "that in a company where the works of Richardson were reading either privately or aloud the conversation at once became more interesting and animated." This, surely, is a legitimate test to which to submit a novel. You sometimes hear people say of a book, "Oh, it is not worth talking about! I was only reading it."

The great Napoleon was a true Richardsonian. Only once did he ever seem to take any interest in an Englishman. It was whilst he was first consul and when he was introduced to an officer called Lovelace: "Why," he exclaimed with emotion, "that is the name of the man in *Clarissa*!" When our own great critic, Hazlitt, heard of this incident he fell in love with Napoleon on the spot, and subsequently wrote his life in numerous volumes.

In Germany *Clarissa* had a great sale, and those of you who are acquainted with German sentiment will have no difficulty in tracing a good deal of it to its original fountain in Fleet Street.

As a man, Richardson had perhaps only two faults. He was very nervous on the subject of his health, and he was very vain. His first fault gave a great deal of trouble to his wives and families, his second afforded nobody anything but pleasure. The vanity of a distinguished man, if at the same time he happens to be a good man, is a quality so agreeable in its manifestations that to look for it and not to find it would be to miss a pleasure. When the French poet Boileau was invited to Versailles by Louis Quatorze, he was much annoyed by the vanity of that monarch. "Whenever," said he, "the conversation left the king's doings"—and, let us guess, just approached the poet's verses—"his majesty always had a yawning-fit, or suggested a walk on the terrace." The fact is, it is not vanity, but contending vanities that give pain.

As for those of you who cannot read Richardson's nineteen volumes, it can only be said you are a large and intelligent class of persons. You

number amongst you poets like Byron—for I presume Byron is still among the poets—and philosophers like d'Alembert, who, when asked whether Richardson was not right in imitating Nature, replied, "Yes, but not to the point of ennui." We must not bear you malice or blacken your private characters. On the other hand, you must not sneer at us or call us milksops. There is nothing to be proud of, I can assure you, in not being able to read *Clarissa Harlowe*, or to appreciate the genius which created Lovelace.

A French critic, M. Scherer, has had the audacity to doubt whether *Tristram Shandy* is much read in England, and it is commonly asserted in France that *Clarissa* is too good for us. Tristram may be left to his sworn admirers, who could at any moment take the field with all the pomp and circumstance of war, but with Clarissa it is different. Her bodyguard is small and is often in need of recruits. This, indeed, is my apology for the trouble I have put you to.

EDWARD GIBBON

A LECTURE

1892

IT was at Rome, on the 15th of October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted fryars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the Decline and Fall of the City first started to my mind.

It was on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page, in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen I took several turns in a *berceau*, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on recovery of my freedom and perhaps of the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatever might be the future fate of my history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious.

Between these two passages lies the romance of Gibbon's life—a romance which must be looked for, not, indeed, in the volumes, whether the original quartos or the subsequent octavos, of his history—but in the elements which went to make that history what it is: the noble conception, the shaping intellect, the mastered learning, the stately diction and the daily toil.

Mr. Bagehot has declared that the way to reverence Gibbon is not to read him at all, but to look at him, from outside, in the bookcase, and think

how much there is within; what a course of events, what a muster-roll of names, what a steady solemn sound. All Mr. Bagehot's jokes have a kernel inside them. The supreme merit of Gibbon's history is not to be found in deep thoughts, or in wide views, or in profound knowledge of human nature, or prophetic vision. Seldom was there an historian less well-equipped with these fine things than he. Its glory is its architecture, its structure, its organism. There it is, it is worth looking at, for it is invulnerable, indispensable, immortal. The metaphors which have been showered upon it, prove how fond people have been of looking at it from the outside. It has been called a Bridge, less obviously an Aqueduct, more prosaically a Road. We applaud the design and marvel at the execution.

There is something mournful in this chorus of approbation in which it is not difficult to detect the notes of glad surprise. It tells a tale of infirmity both of life and purpose. A complete thing staggers us. We are accustomed to failure.

> What act proves all its thought had been?

The will is weak, opportunities are barren, temper uncertain, and life short.

> I thought all labour, yet no less,
> Bear up beneath their unsuccess;
> Look at the end of work: contrast
> The petty done—the undone vast.

It is Gibbon's triumph that he made his thoughts acts. He is not exactly what you call a pious writer, but he is provocative of at least one pious feeling. A sabbatical calm results from the contemplation of his labours. Succeeding scholars have read his

history and pronounced it good. It is likewise finished. Hence this feeling of surprise.

Gibbon's life has the simplicity of an epic. His work was to write his history. Nothing else was allowed to rob this idea of its majesty. It brooked no rival near its throne. It dominated his life, for though a man of pleasure, and, to speak plainly, a good bit of a coxcomb, he had always the cadences of the *Decline and Fall* in his ears. It has been wittily said of him, that he came at last to believe that he was the Roman Empire, or, at all events, something equally majestic and imposing. His life had, indeed, its episodes, but so has an epic. Gibbon's episodes are interesting, abrupt, and always concluded. In his sixteenth year he, without the aid of a priest or the seductions of ritual, read himself into the Church of Rome, and was one fine June morning in 1753 baptised by a Jesuit father. By Christmas, 1754, he had read himself out again. Gibbon's conversion was perfectly genuine and should never be spoken of otherwise than respectfully, but it was entirely a matter of books and reading. "Persons influence us," cries Dr. Newman, "voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us. Many a man will live and die upon a dogma; no man will be a martyr for a conclusion." It takes all sorts to make a world, and our plump historian was one of those whose actions are determined in libraries, whose lives are unswayed by personal influences, to whom conclusions may mean a great deal, but dogmas certainly nothing. Whether Gibbon on leaving off his Catholicism ever became a Protestant again, except in the sense that Bayle declared himself

one, is doubtful. But all this makes an interesting episode. The second episode is his well-known love affair with Mademoiselle Curchod, afterwards Madame Necker and the mother of that social portent Madame de Staël. Gibbon, of course, behaved badly in this affair. He fell in love, made known his plight, obtained mademoiselle's consent, and then speeded home to tell his father. "Love," said he, "will make me eloquent." The elder Gibbon would not hear of it: the younger tamely acquiesced. His very acquiescence, like all else about him, has become classical. "I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son." He proceeds: "My wound was insensibly healed by time, absence and the habits of a new life." It is shocking. Never, surely, was love so flouted before. Gibbon is charitably supposed by some persons to have regretted Paganism, but it was lucky for both him and for me that the gods had abandoned Olympus, since otherwise it would have required the pen of a Greek dramatist to depict the horrors that must have eventually overtaken him for so impious an outrage; as it was, he simply grew fatter every day. A very recent French biographer of Madame Necker, who has published some letters of Gibbon's for the first time, evidently expects his readers to get very angry with this perfidious son of Albion. It is much too late to get angry. Of all the many wrongs women suffer at the hands of men, that of not marrying them is the one they ought to find it easiest to forgive; they generally do forgive. Madame Necker forgave, and if she, why not you and I? Years after she welcomed Gibbon to her house, and there he used to sit, fat and famous,

tapping his snuff-box and arranging his ruffles, and watching with a smile of complacency the infantine, yet, I doubt not, the pronounced gambols of the vivacious Corinne. After Necker's fall, Gibbon writes to Madame: "Your husband's condition is always worthy of envy: he knows himself, his enemies respect him, Europe admires him, *you* love him." I decline to be angry with such a man.

His long residence in Switzerland, an unusual thing in those days, makes a third episode, which, in so far as it led him to commence author in the French language, and to study Pascal as a master of style, was not without its effects on his history, but it never diverted him from his studies or changed their channels. Though he lived fifteen years in Lausanne, he never climbed a mountain or ever went to the foot of one, for though not wholly indifferent to Nature, he loved to see her framed in a window. He actually has the audacity, in a note to his fifty-ninth chapter, to sneer at St. Bernard because that true lover of nature on one occasion, either because his joy in the external world at times interfered with his devotions, or, as I think, because he was bored by the vulgar rhapsodies of his monkish companions, abstained from looking at the lake of Geneva. Gibbon's note is characteristic: "To admire or despise St. Bernard as he ought, the reader should have before the windows of his library the beauty of that incomparable landscape." St. Bernard was to Gibbon, as Wordsworth to Pope,

> A forest seer,
> A minstrel of the natural year,
> A lover true, who knew by heart
> Each joy the mountain dales impart.

He was proud to confess that whatever knowledge he had of the Scriptures he had acquired chiefly in the woods and the fields, and that beeches and oaks had been his best teachers of the Word of God. One cannot fancy Gibbon in a forest. But if Gibbon had not been fonder of the library than of the lake, though he might have known more than he did of "moral evil and of good," he would hardly have been the author he was.

But the *Decline and Fall* was threatened from a quarter more likely to prove dangerous than the "incomparable landscape." On September 10th, 1774, Gibbon writes:

> Yesterday morning about half-past seven, as I was destroying an army of barbarians, I heard a double rap at the door and my friend Mr. Eliot was soon introduced. After some idle conversation he told me that if I was desirous of being in Parliament he had an *independent* seat, very much at my service. This is a fine prospect opening upon me, and if next spring I should take my seat and publish my book—(he meant the first volume only)—it will be a very memorable era in my life. I am ignorant whether my borough will be Liskeard or St. Germains.

Mr. Eliot controlled four boroughs, and it was Liskeard that became Gibbon's, and for ten years, though not always for Liskeard, he sat in Parliament. Ten most eventful years they were too, both in our national and parliamentary history. This might have been not an episode, but a catastrophe. Mr. Eliot's untimely entrance might not merely have postponed the destruction of a horde of barbarians, but have destroyed the history itself. However, Mr. Gibbon never opened his mouth in the House of Commons; "I assisted," says he, in his magnificent way, "at" (mark the preposition) "at the debates of a free assembly," that is, he

supported Lord North. He was not from the first content to be a mute; he prepared a speech and almost made up his mind to catch Sir Fletcher Norton's eye. The subject, no mean one, was to be the American war; but his courage oozed away, he did not rise in his place. A month after he writes from Boodle's: "I am still a mute; it is more tremendous than I imagined; the great speakers fill me with despair, the bad ones with terror." In 1779 his silent assistance was rewarded with a seat at the Board of Trade, and a salary of between seven and eight hundred a year. Readers of Burke's great speech on Economical Reform will remember the twenty minutes he devoted to this marvellous Board of Trade, with its perpetual virtual adjournment and unbroken sitting vacation. Such was Gibbon's passion for style that he listened to the speech with delight, and gives us the valuable assurance that it was spoken just as it reads, and that nobody enjoyed either hearing or reading it more than he did. What a blessing it is to have a good temper! But Gibbon's constituency did not approve of his becoming a minister's man, and he lost his seat at the general election of 1783. "Mr. Eliot," this is Gibbon's account of it, "Mr. Eliot was now deeply engaged in the measures of opposition, and the electors of Liskeard are commonly of the same opinion as Mr. Eliot." Lord North found him another seat, and for a short time he sat in the new Parliament for the important seaport of Lymington, but his office being abolished in 1784, he bade Parliament and England farewell, and, taking his library with him, departed for Lausanne to conclude his history.

Gibbon, after completing his history, entertained notions of writing other books, but, as a matter of fact, he had but one thing left him to do in order to discharge his duty to the universe. He had written a magnificent history of the Roman Empire. It remained to write the history of the historian. Accordingly we have the Autobiography. These two immortal works act and react upon one another; the History sends us to the Autobiography, and the Autobiography returns us to the History.

The style of the Autobiography is better than that of the History. The awful word "verbose" has been launched against certain pages of the History by a critic, formidable and friendly—the great Porson. There is not a superfluous word in the Autobiography. The fact is, in this matter of style, Gibbon took a great deal more pains with himself than he did with the empire. He sent the History, except the first volume, straight to his printer from his first rough copy. He made six different sketches of the Autobiography. It is a most studied performance, and may be boldly pronounced perfect. Not to know it almost by heart is to deny yourself a great and wholly innocent pleasure. Of the History it is permissible to say with Mr. Silas Wegg, "I haven't been, not to say right slap through him very lately, having been otherwise employed, Mr. Boffin"; but the Autobiography is no more than a good-sized pamphlet. It has had the reward of shortness. It is not only our best, but our best known autobiography. Almost its first sentence is about the style it is to be in: "The style shall be simple and

familiar, but style is the image of character, and the habits of correct writing may produce without labour or design the appearance of art and study." There is nothing artless or unstudied about the Autobiography, but is it not sometimes a relief to exchange the quips and cranks of some of our modern writers, whose humour it is to be as it were for ever slapping their readers in the face or grinning at them from unexpected corners, for the stately roll of the Gibbonian sentence? The style settled, he proceeds to say something about the pride of race, but the pride of letters soon conquers it, and as we glance down the page we see advancing to meet us, curling its head, as Shakespeare says of billows in a storm, the god-like sentence which makes it for ever certain, not indeed that there will never be a better novel than *Tom Jones*, for that I suppose is still just possible, but that no novel can ever receive so magnificent a compliment. The sentence is well known but irresistible.

> Our immortal Fielding was of the younger branch of the Earls of Denbigh, who draw their origin from the Counts of Hapsburg. Far different have been the fortunes of the English and German divisions of the family. The former, the knights and sheriffs of Leicestershire, have slowly risen to the dignity of a peerage, the latter, the Emperors of Germany and Kings of Spain, have threatened the liberty of the old and invaded the treasures of the new world. The successors of Charles the Fifth may disdain their brethren of England, but the romance of *Tom Jones*, that exquisite picture of human manners, will outlive the Palace of the Escurial and the imperial eagle of the House of Austria.

Well might Thackeray exclaim in his lecture on Fielding, "There can be no gainsaying the sentence of this great judge. To have your name mentioned by Gibbon is like having it written on the dome of

St. Peter's. Pilgrims from all the world admire and behold it."

After all this preliminary magnificence Gibbon condescends to approach his own pedigree. There was not much to tell, and the little there was he did not know. A man of letters whose memory is respected by all lovers of old books and Elizabethan lyrics, Sir Egerton Brydges, was a cousin of Gibbon's, and as genealogies were this unfortunate man's consuming passion, he of course knew all that Gibbon ought to have known about the family, and speaks with a herald's contempt of the historian's perfunctory investigations. "It is a very unaccountable thing," says Sir Egerton, "that Gibbon was so ignorant of the immediate branch of the family whence he sprang"; but the truth is that Gibbon was far prouder of his Palace of the Escurial and his imperial eagle of the House of Austria than of his family tree, which was indeed of the most ordinary hedge-row description. His grandfather was a South Sea director, and when the bubble burst he was compelled by Act of Parliament to disclose on oath his whole fortune. He returned it at £106,543 5s. 6d., exclusive of antecedent settlements. It was all confiscated, and then £10,000 was voted the poor man to begin again upon. Such bold oppression, says the grandson, can scarcely be shielded by the omnipotence of Parliament. The old man did not keep his £10,000 in a napkin, and speedily began, as his grandson puts it, to erect on the ruins of the old, the edifice of a new fortune. The ruins must, I think, have been more spacious than the affidavit would suggest, for when only sixteen years after-

wards the elder Gibbon died, he was found to be possessed of considerable property in Sussex, Hampshire, Buckinghamshire, and the New River Company, as well as of a spacious house with gardens and grounds at Putney. A fractional share of this inheritance secured to our historian the liberty of action so necessary for the accomplishment of his great design. Large fortunes have their uses. Mr. Milton, the scrivener, Mr. Gibbon, the South Sea director, and Dr. Darwin of Shrewsbury, had respectively something to do with *Paradise Lost*, the *Decline and Fall*, and the *Origin of Species*.

The most, indeed the only, interesting fact about the Gibbon *entourage* is that the greatest of English mystics, William Law, the inimitable author of *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, adapted to the State and Conditions of all Orders of Christians*, was long tutor to the historian's father, and in that capacity accompanied the future historian to Emanuel College, Cambridge, and was afterwards, and till the end of his days, spiritual director to Miss Hester Gibbon, the historian's eccentric maiden aunt.

It is an unpleasing impertinence for anyone to assume that nobody save himself reads any particular book. I read with astonishment the other day that Sir Humphry Davy's *Consolations in Travel; or, The Closing Days of a Philosopher's Life*, was a curious and totally forgotten work. It is, however, always safe to say of a good book that it is not read as much as it ought to be, and of Law's *Serious Call* you may add, " or as much as it used to be." It is a book with a strange and

moving spiritual pedigree. Dr. Johnson, one remembers, took it up carelessly at Oxford, expecting to find it a dull book, "as" (the words are his, not mine) "such books generally are"; but, he proceeds, "I found Law an overmatch for me, and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest." George Whitefield writes, "Soon after my coming up to the university, seeing a small edition of Mr. Law's *Serious Call* in a friend's hand, I soon purchased it. God worked powerfully upon my soul by that excellent treatise." The celebrated Thomas Scott, of Aston Sandford, with the confidence of his school, dates the beginning of his spiritual life from the hour when he "carelessly," as he says, "took up Mr. Law's *Serious Call*, a book I had hitherto treated with contempt." When we remember how Newman in his *Apologia* speaks of Thomas Scott as the writer "to whom, humanly speaking, I almost owe my soul," we become lost amidst a mazy dance of strange, spectral influences which flit about the centuries and make us what we are. Splendid achievement though the *History of the Decline and Fall* may be, glorious monument though it is, more lasting than brass, of learning and industry, yet in sundry moods it seems but a poor and barren thing by the side of a book which, like Law's *Serious Call*, has proved its power

> To pierce the heart and tame the will.

But I must put the curb on my enthusiasm, or I shall find myself re-echoing the sentiment of a once celebrated divine who brought down Exeter Hall by proclaiming, at the top of his voice, that

he would sooner be the author of *The Washerwoman on Salisbury Plain* than of *Paradise Lost.*

But Law's *Serious Call*, to do it only bare literary justice, is a great deal more like *Paradise Lost* than *The Washerwoman on Salisbury Plain*, and deserves better treatment at the hands of religious people than to be reprinted, as it too often is, in a miserable, truncated, witless form which would never have succeeded in arresting the wandering attention of Johnson or in saving the soul of Thomas Scott. The motto of all books of original genius is:

Love me or leave me alone.

Gibbon read Law's *Serious Call*, but it left him where it found him. "Had not," so he writes, "Law's vigorous mind been clouded by enthusiasm, he might be ranked with the most agreeable and ingenious writers of his time."

Upon the death of Law in 1761, it is sad to have to state that Miss Hester Gibbon cast aside the severe rule of female dress which he had expounded in his *Serious Call*, and she had practised for sixty years of her life. She now appeared like Malvolio, resplendent in yellow stockings. Still, it was something to have kept the good lady's feet from straying into such evil garments for so long. Miss Gibbon had a comfortable estate; and our historian, as her nearest male relative, kept his eye upon the reversion. The fifteenth and sixteenth chapters had created a coolness, but he addressed her a letter in which he assured her that, allowing for differences of expression, he had the satisfaction of feeling that practically he and she thought alike on the great subject of religion. Whether she

believed him or not I cannot say; but she left him her estate in Sussex. I must stop a moment to consider the hard and far different fate of Porson. Gibbon had taken occasion to refer to the seventh verse of the fifth chapter of the First Epistle of St. John as spurious. It has now disappeared from our Bibles, without leaving a trace even in the margin. So judicious a writer as Dean Alford long ago, in his Greek Testament, observed, "There is not a shadow of a reason for supposing it genuine." An archdeacon of Gibbon's period thought otherwise, and asserted the genuineness of the text, whereupon Porson wrote a book and proved it to be no portion of the inspired text. On this a female relative who had Porson down in her will for a comfortable annuity of £300, revoked that part of her testamentary disposition, and substituted a paltry bequest of £30: "for," said she, "I hear he has been writing against the Holy Scriptures." As Porson only got £16 for writing the book, it certainly cost him dear. But the book remains a monument of his learning and wit. The last quarter of the annuity must long since have been paid.

Gibbon, the only one of a family of five who managed to grow up at all, had no school life; for though a short time at Westminster, his feeble health prevented regularity of attendance. His father never won his respect, nor his mother (who died when he was ten) his affection. "I am tempted," he says, "to enter my protest against the trite and lavish praise of the happiness of our boyish years which is echoed with so much affectation in the world. That happiness I have

never known." Upon which passage Sainte-Beuve characteristically remarks "that it is those who have been deprived of a mother's solicitude, of the down and flower of tender affection, of the vague yet penetrating charm of dawning impressions, who are most easily denuded of the sentiment of religion."

Gibbon was, however, born free of the "fair brotherhood" Macaulay so exquisitely described in his famous poem, written after the Edinburgh election. Reading became his sole employment. He enjoyed all the advantages of the most irregular of educations, and in his fifteenth year arrived at Oxford, to use his celebrated words, though for that matter almost every word in the Autobiography is celebrated, with a stock of erudition that might have puzzled a doctor, and a degree of ignorance of which a schoolboy would have been ashamed —for example, he did not know the Greek alphabet, nor is there any reason to suppose that he would have been taught it at Oxford.

I do not propose to refer to what he says about his university. I hate giving pain, besides which there have been new statutes since 1752. In Gibbon's time there were no public examinations at all, and no class-lists—a Saturnian reign which I understand it is now sought to restore. Had Gibbon followed his father's example and gone to Cambridge, he would have found the Mathematical Tripos fairly started on its beneficent career, and might have taken as good a place in it as Dr. Dodd had just done, a divine who is still year after year referred to in the University Calendar as the author of *Thoughts in Prison*, the circumstance that the

thinker was later on taken from prison, and hung by the neck until he was dead, being no less wisely than kindly omitted from a publication, one of the objects of which is to inspire youth with confidence that the path of mathematics is the way to glory.

On his profession of Catholicism, Gibbon, *ipso facto*, ceased to be a member of the university, and his father, with a sudden accession of good sense, packed off the young pervert, who at that time had a very big head and a very small body, and was just as full of controversial theology as he could hold, to a Protestant pastor's at Lausanne, where in an uncomfortable house, with an ill-supplied table and a scarcity of pocket-money, the ex-fellow-commoner of Magdalen was condemned to live from his sixteenth to his twenty-first year. His time was mainly spent in reading. Here he learnt Greek; here also he fell in love with Mademoiselle Curchod. In the spring of 1758 he came home. He was at first very shy, and went out but little, pursuing his studies even in lodgings in Bond Street. But he was shortly to be shaken out of his dumps, and made an Englishman and a soldier.

If anything could provoke Gibbon's placid shade, it would be the light and airy way his military experiences are often spoken of, as if, like a modern volunteer, he had but attended an Easter Monday review. I do not believe the history of literature affords an equally striking example of self-sacrifice. He was the most sedentary of men. He hated exercise, and rarely took any. Once after spending some weeks in the summer at Lord Sheffield's

country place, when about to go, his hat was missing. "When," he was asked, "did you last see it?" "On my arrival," he replied. "I left it on the hall-table; I have had no occasion for it since." Lord Sheffield's guests always knew that they would find Mr. Gibbon in the library and meet him at the dinner-table. He abhorred a horse. His one vocation, and his only avocation, was reading, not lazy glancing and skipping, but downright savage reading—geography, chronology, and all the tougher sides of history. What glorious, what martial times, indeed, must those have been that made Mr. Gibbon leap into the saddle, desert his books, and for two mortal years and a half live in camps! He was two months at Blandford, three months at Cranbrook, six months at Dover, four months at Devizes, as many at Salisbury, and six more at Southampton, where the troops were disbanded. During all this time Captain Gibbon was energetically employed. He dictated the orders and exercised the battalion. It did him a world of good. What a pity Carlyle could not have been subjected to the same discipline! The cessation, too, of his habit of continued reading gave him time for a little thinking, and when he returned to his father's house, in Hampshire, he had become fixed in his determination to write a history, though of what was still undecided.

I am rather afraid to say it, for no two men could well be more unlike one another, but Gibbon always reminds me in an odd inverted way of Milton. I suppose it is because as the one is our grandest author, so the other is our most grandiose. Both are self-conscious and make no apology—

Milton magnificently self-conscious, Gibbon splendidly so. Everyone knows the great passages in which Milton, in 1642, asked the readers of his pamphlet on *The Reason of Church Government Urged against Prelacy*, to go on trust with him for some years for his great unwritten poem, as " being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth or the vapour of wine, like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amorist or the trencher fury of a rhyming parasite, nor to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her seven daughters, but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His seraphim with the hallow'd fire of His Altar to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases: to this must be added industrious and select reading, study, observation and insight into all seemly opinions, arts, and affairs." Different men, different minds. There are things terrestrial as well as things celestial. Certainly Gibbon's Autobiography contains no passages like those which are to be found in Milton's pamphlets; but for all that he, in his mundane way, consecrated himself for his self-imposed task, and spared no toil to equip himself for it. He, too, no less than Milton, had his high hope and his hard attempting. He tells us in his stateliest way how he first thought of one subject and then another, and what progress he had made in his different schemes before he abandoned them, and what reasons induced him so to do. Providence watched over the future historian of the Roman Empire as surely as it did over the future author of *Paradise Lost*, as surely as it does over everyone who has it in him

to do anything really great. Milton, we know, in early life was enamoured of King Arthur, and had it in his mind to make that blameless king the hero of his promised epic, but

> What resounds
> In fable or romance of Uther's son,
> Begirt with British and Armoric knights,

can brook a moment's comparison with the baffled hero of *Paradise Lost*; so, too, what a mercy that Gibbon did not fritter away his splendid energy, as he once contemplated doing, on Sir Walter Raleigh, or squander his talents on a history of Switzerland or even of Florence!

After the disbanding of the militia Gibbon obtained his father's consent to spend the money it was originally proposed to lay out in buying him a seat in Parliament, upon foreign travel, and early in 1763 he reached Paris, where he abode three months. An accomplished scholar, whose too early death all who knew him can never cease to deplore, Mr. Cotter Morison, whose sketch of Gibbon is, by general consent, admitted to be one of the most valuable books of a delightful series, does his best, with but partial success, to conceal his annoyance at Gibbon's stupidly placid enjoyment of Paris and French cookery. "He does not seem to be aware," says Mr. Morison, "that he was witnessing one of the most singular social phases which have ever yet been presented in the history of man." Mr. Morison does not, indeed, blame Gibbon for this, but having, as he had, the most intimate acquaintance with this period of French history, and knowing the tremendous issues involved in it, he could not but be chagrined to

notice how Gibbon remained callous and impervious. And, indeed, when the Revolution came it took no one more by surprise than it did the man who had written the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Writing, in 1792, to Lord Sheffield, Gibbon says, "Remember the proud fabric of the French monarchy: not four years ago it stood founded, and might it not seem on the rock of time, force, and opinion, supported by the triple authority of the Church, the Nobility, and the Parliament?" But the Revolution came for all that; and what, when it did come, did it teach Mr. Gibbon? "Do not, I beseech you, tamper with parliamentary representation. If you begin to improve the Constitution, you may be driven step by step from the disfranchisement of Old Sarum to the King in Newgate; the Lords voted useless, the bishops abolished, the House of Commons *sans culottes*." The importance of shutting off the steam and sitting on the safety-valve was what the French Revolution taught Mr. Gibbon. Mr. Bagehot says: "Gibbon's horror of the French Revolution was derived from the fact that he had arrived at the conclusion that he was the sort of person a populace invariably kills." An excellent reason, in my opinion, for hating revolution, but not for misunderstanding it.

After leaving Paris Gibbon lived nearly a year in Lausanne, reading hard to prepare himself for Italy. He made his own handbook. At last he felt himself fit to cross the Alps, which he did seated in an osier basket planted on a man's shoulders. He did not envy Hannibal his elephant. He lingered four months in Florence, and then

entered Rome in a spirit of the most genuine and romantic enthusiasm. His zeal made him positively active, though it is impossible to resist a smile at the picture he draws of himself "treading with a lofty step the ruins of the Forum." He was in Rome eighteen weeks; there he had, as we saw at the beginning, his heavenly vision, to which he was not disobedient. He paid a visit of six weeks' duration to Naples, and then returned home more rapidly. "The spectacle of Venice," he says, "afforded some hours of astonishment." Gibbon has sometimes been called "long-winded," but when he chooses nobody can be shorter with either a city or a century.

He returned to England in 1765, and for five rather dull years lived in his father's house in the country or in London lodgings. In 1770 his father died, and in 1772 Gibbon took a house in Bentinck Street, Manchester Square, filled it with books—for in those days it must not be forgotten there was no public library of any kind in London—and worked hard at his first volume, which appeared in February, 1775. It made him famous, also infamous, since it concluded with the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters on Christianity. In 1781 two more volumes appeared. In 1783 he gave up Parliament and London, and rolled over Westminster Bridge in a postchaise, on his way to Lausanne, where he had his home for the rest of his days. In May, 1788, the three last volumes appeared. He died in St. James's Street whilst on a visit to London, on the 15th of January, 1794, of a complaint of a most pronounced character, which he had with characteristic and almost

criminal indolence totally neglected for thirty years. He was buried in Fletching Churchyard, Sussex, in the family burial-place of his faithful friend and model editor, the first Lord Sheffield. He had not completed his fifty-eighth year.

Before concluding with a few very humble observations on Gibbon's writings, something ought to be said about him as a social being. In this aspect he had distinguished merit, though his fondness of and fitness for society came late. He had no school-days, no college days, no gilded youth. From sixteen to twenty-one he lived poorly in Lausanne, and came home more Swiss than English. Nor was his father of any use to him. It took him a long time to rub off his shyness; but the militia, Paris, and Rome, and, above all, the proud consciousness of a noble design, made a man of him, and after 1772 he became a well-known figure in London society. He was a man of fashion as well as of letters. In this respect, and, indeed, in all others, except their common love of learning, he differed from Dr. Johnson. Lords and ladies, remarked that high authority, don't like having their mouths shut. Gibbon never shut anybody's mouth, and in Johnson's presence rarely opened his own. Johnson's dislike of Gibbon does not seem to have been based upon his heterodoxy, but his ugliness. "He is such an amazing ugly fellow," said that Adonis. Boswell follows suit, and, with still less claim to be critical, complains loudly of Gibbon's ugliness. He also hated him very sincerely. "The fellow poisons the whole club to me," he cries. I feel sorry for Boswell, who

has deserved well of the human race. Ironical people like Gibbon are rarely tolerant of brilliant folly. Gibbon, no doubt, was ugly. We get a glance at him in one of Horace Walpole's letters, which, sparkling as it does with vanity, spite, and humour, is always pleasant. He is writing to Mr. Mason:

"You will be diverted to hear that Mr. Gibbon has quarrelled with me. He lent me his second volume in the middle of November; I returned it with a most civil panegyric. He came for more incense. I gave it, but, alas! with too much sincerity; I added: 'Mr. Gibbon, I am sorry *you* should have pitched on so disgusting a subject as the Constantinopolitan history. There is so much of the Arians and Eunomians and semi-Pelagians; and there is such a strange contrast between Roman and Gothic manners, that, though you have written the story as well as it could be written, I fear few will have patience to read it.' He coloured, all his round features squeezed themselves into sharp angles; he screwed up his button-mouth, and rapping his snuff-box, said, 'It had never been put together before'—so *well* he meant to add, but gulped it. He meant so *well*, certainly, for Tillemont, whom he quotes in every page, has done the very thing. Well, from that hour to this, I have never seen him, though he used to call once or twice a week; nor has he sent me the third volume, as he promised. I well knew his vanity, even about his ridiculous face and person, but thought he had too much sense to avow it so palpably." "So much," adds Walpole, with sublime nescience of the verdict of posterity upon his own most amusing self, "so much for literature and its fops."

Male ugliness is an endearing quality, and in a man of great talents it assists his reputation. It mollifies our inferiority to be able to add to our honest admiration of anyone's great intellectual merit, "But did you ever see such a chin!"

Nobody except Johnson, who was morbid on the subject of looks, liked Gibbon the less for having a button-mouth and a ridiculous nose. He was, Johnson and Boswell apart, a popular member of the club. Sir Joshua and he were, in particular, great cronies, and went about to all kinds of places, and mixed in every sort of society. In May, June, and July, 1779, Gibbon sat for his picture—that famous portrait to be found at the beginning of every edition of the History. Sir Joshua notes in his Diary: "No new sitters—hard at work re-painting the *Nativity*, and busy with sittings of Gibbon."

If we are to believe contemporary gossip, this was not the first time Reynolds had depicted the historian. Some years earlier the great painter had executed a celebrated portrait of Dr. Beattie, still pleasingly remembered by the lovers of old-fashioned poetry as the poet of *The Minstrel*, but who, in 1773, was better known as the author of an *Essay on Truth*. This personage, who in later life, it is melancholy to relate, took to drinking, is represented in Reynolds's picture in his Oxford gown of Doctor of Laws, with his famous essay under his arm, while beside him is Truth, habited as an angel, holding in one hand a pair of scales, and with the other thrusting down three frightful figures emblematic of Sophistry, Scepticism, and Infidelity. That Voltaire and Hume stood for two of these figures was no secret, but it was whispered

Gibbon was the third. Even if so, an incident so trifling was not likely to ruffle the composure, or prevent the intimacy, of two such good-tempered men as Reynolds and Gibbon. The latter was immensely proud of Reynolds's portrait—the authorised portrait, of course—the one for which he had paid. He had it hanging up in his library at Lausanne, and, if we may believe Charles Fox, was fonder of looking at it than out of the window upon that incomparable landscape, with indifference to which he had twitted St. Bernard.

But, as I have said, Gibbon was a man of fashion as well as a man of letters. In another volume of Walpole we have a glimpse of him playing a rubber of whist. His opponents were Horace himself and Lady Beck. His partner was a lady whom Walpole irreverently calls the Archbishopess of Canterbury.[1] At Brooks's, White's, and Boodle's, Gibbon was a prime favourite. His quiet manner, ironical humour, and perpetual good temper made him excellent company. He is, indeed, reported once, at Brooks's, to have expressed a desire to see the heads of Lord North and half-a-dozen ministers on the table; but as this was only a few days before he accepted a seat at the Board of Trade at their hands, his wrath was evidently of the kind that does not allow the sun to go down upon it. His moods were usually mild:

> Soon as to Brooks's thence thy footsteps bend,
> What gratulations thy approach attend!
> See Gibbon rap his box, auspicious sign
> That classic wit and compliment combine.

[1] By which title he refers to Mrs. Cornwallis, a lively lady who used to get her right reverend lord, himself a capital hand at whist, into great trouble by persisting in giving routs on Sunday.

To praise Gibbon heartily, you must speak in low tones. "His cheek," says Mr. Morison, "rarely flushes in enthusiasm for a good cause." He was, indeed, not obviously on the side of the angels. But he was a dutiful son to a trying father, an affectionate and thoughtful stepson to a stepmother who survived him, and the most faithful and warm-hearted of friends. In this article of friendship he not only approaches, but reaches, the romantic. While in his teens he made friends with a Swiss of his own age. A quarter of a century later on, we find the boyish companions chumming together under the same roof at Lausanne, and delighting in each other's society. His attachment to Lord Sheffield is a beautiful thing. It is impossible to read Gibbon's letters without responding to the feeling which breathes through Lord Sheffield's Preface to the Miscellaneous Writings:

> The letters will prove how pleasant, friendly, and amiable Mr. Gibbon was in private life; and if in publishing letters so flattering to myself I incur the imputation of vanity, I meet the charge with a frank confession that I am indeed highly vain of having enjoyed for so many years the esteem, the confidence, and the affection of a man whose social qualities endeared him to the most accomplished society, whose talents, great as they were, must be acknowledged to have been fully equalled by the sincerity of his friendship.

To have been pleasant, friendly, amiable and sincere in friendship, to have written the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and the Autobiography, must be Gibbon's excuse for his unflushing cheek.

To praise Gibbon is not wholly superfluous; to commend his history would be so. Last May it attained, as a whole, its hundredth year. Time has not told upon it. It stands unaltered, and

with its authority unimpaired. It would be invidious to name the histories it has seen born and die. Its shortcomings have been pointed out —it is well; its inequalities exposed—that is fair; its style criticised—that is just. But it is still read. "Whatever else is read," says Professor Freeman, "Gibbon must be."

The tone he thought fit to adopt towards Christianity was, quite apart from all particular considerations, a mistaken one. No man is big enough to speak slightingly of the constructions his fellowmen have from time to time put upon the Infinite. And conduct which in a philosopher is ill-judged, is in a historian ridiculous. Gibbon's sneers could not alter the fact that his History, which he elected to style the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, might equally well, as Dean Stanley has observed, have been called the *Rise and Progress of the Christian Church*. This tone of Gibbon's was the more unfortunate because he was not of those men who are by the order of their minds incapable of theology. He was an admirable theologian, and, even as it is, we have Cardinal Newman's authority for the assertion that Gibbon is the only Church historian worthy of the name who has written in English.

Gibbon's love of the unseemly may also be deprecated. His is not the boisterous impropriety which may sometimes be observed staggering across the pages of Mr. Carlyle, but the more offensive variety which is overheard sniggering in the notes.

The importance, the final value of Gibbon's History has been assailed in high quarters. Coleridge, in a well-known passage in his *Table Talk*—

too long to be quoted—said Gibbon was a man of immense reading; but he had no philosophy. "I protest," he adds, "I do not remember a single philosophical attempt made throughout the work to fathom the ultimate causes of the decline and fall of the empire." This spoiled Gibbon for Coleridge, who has told us that "though he had read all the famous histories, and he believed some history of every country or nation, that is or ever existed, he had never done so for the story itself—the only thing interesting to him being the principles to be evolved from and illustrated by the facts."

I am not going to insult the majestic though thickly-veiled figure of the Philosophy of History. Every sensible man, though he might blush to be called a philosopher, must wish to be the wiser for his reading; but it may, I think, be fairly said that the first business of a historian is to tell his story, nobly and splendidly, with vivacity and vigour. Then I do not see why we children of a larger growth may not be interested in the annals of mankind simply as a story, without worrying every moment to evolve principles from each part of it. If I choose to be interested in the colour of Mary Queen of Scots' eyes, or the authorship of the *Letters of Junius*, I claim the right to be so. Of course, if I imagine either of these subjects to be matters of importance—if I devote my life to their elucidation, if I bore my friends with presentation pamphlets about them—why, then, I am either a feeble fribble or an industrious fool; but if I do none of these things I ought to be left in peace, and not ridiculed by those who seem to regard the noble stream of events much as Brindley did rivers—

mainly as something which fills their ugly canals of dreary and frequently false comment.

But, thirdly, whilst yielding the first place to philosophy, divine philosophy, as I suppose, when one comes to die, one will be glad to have done, it is desirable that the text and the comment should be kept separate and apart. The historian who loads his frail craft with that perilous and shifting freight, philosophy, adds immensely to the dangers of his voyage across the ocean of Time. Gibbon was no fool, yet it is as certain as anything can be, that had he put much of his philosophy into his history, both would have gone to the bottom long ago. For even better philosophy than Gibbon's would have been is apt to grow mouldy in a quarter of a century, and to need three new coats of good oily rhetoric to make it presentable to each new generation.

Gibbon was neither a great thinker nor a great man. He had neither light nor warmth. This is what, doubtless, prompted Sir James Mackintosh's famous exclamation, that you might scoop Gibbon's mind out of Burke's without missing it. But hence, I say, the fitness of things that chained Gibbon to his library chair, and set him as his task to write the history of the Roman Empire, whilst leaving Burke at large to illuminate the problems of his own time.

Gibbon avowedly wrote for fame. He built his History meaning it to last. He got £6000 for writing it. The booksellers netted £60,000 by printing it. Gibbon did not mind. He knew it would be the volumes of his History, and not the banking books of his publishers, who no doubt ran

their trade risks, which would keep their place upon men's shelves. He did an honest piece of work, and he has had a noble reward. Had he attempted to know the ultimate causes of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, he must have failed, egregiously, childishly. He abated his pretensions as a philosopher, was content to attempt some picture of the thing acted—of the great pageant of history—and succeeded.

WILLIAM COWPER

1892

THE large and weighty family of Gradgrinds may, from their various well-cushioned coigns of advantage, give forcible utterance to their opinions as to what are the really important things in this life; but the fact remains, distasteful as it may be to those of us who accomplish the disciplinary end of vexing our fathers' souls by other means than "penning stanzas," that the lives of poets, even of people who have passed for poets, eclipse in general and permanent interest the lives of other men. Whilst above the sod, these poets were often miserable enough. But charm hangs over their graves. The sternest pedestrian, even he who is most bent on making his inn by the precise path he has, with much study of the map, previously prescribed for himself, will yet often veer to the right or to the left to visit the lonely churchyard where, as he hears by the way, lie the ashes of some brother of the tuneful quill. It may well be that this brother's verses are not frequently on our lips. It is not the lot of every bard to make quotations. It may sometimes happen to you, as you stand mournfully surveying the little heap, to rack your brains unavailingly for so much as a single couplet; nay, so treacherous is memory, the very title of his best-known poem may, for the moment, have slipped you. But

your heart is melted all the same, and you feel it would indeed have been a churlish thing to go on your original way, unmindful of the fact that

In yonder grave a Druid lies!

And you have your reward. When you have reached your desired haven, and are sitting alone after dinner in the coffee-room, neat-handed Phyllis (were you not fresh from a poet's grave, a homelier name might have served her turn) having administered to your final wants, and disappeared with a pretty flounce, the ruby-coloured wine the dead poet loved, the bottled sunshine of a bygone summer, glows the warmer in your cup as you muse over minstrels now no more, whether

Of mighty poets in their misery dead,

or of such a one as he whose neglected grave you have just visited.

It was a pious act, you feel, to visit that grave. You commend yourself for doing so. As the night draws on, this very simple excursion down a rutty lane and across a meadow begins to wear the hues of devotion and of love; and unless you are very stern with yourself, the chances are that by the time you light your farthing dip, and are proceeding on your dim and perilous way to your bedroom at the end of a creaking passage, you will more than half believe you were that poet's only unselfish friend, and that he died saying so.

All this is due to the charm of poetry. Port has nothing to do with it. Indeed, as a plain matter of fact, who would drink port at a village inn? Nobody feels a bit like this after visiting the tombs of

soldiers, lawyers, statesmen, or divines. These pompous places, viewed through the haze of one's recollections of the "careers" of the men whose names they vainly try to perpetuate, seem but, if I may slightly alter some words of old Cowley's, "An ill show after a sorry sight."

It would be quite impossible to enumerate one-half of the reasons which make poets so interesting. I will mention one, and then pass on to the subject-matter. They often serve to tell you the age of men and books. This is most interesting. There is Mr. Matthew Arnold. How impossible it would be to hazard even a wide solution of the problem of his age, but for the way he has of writing about Lord Byron! Then we know.

> The thought of Byron, of his cry
> Stormily sweet, his Titan agony.

And again:

> What boots it now that Byron bore,
> With haughty scorn which mocked the smart,
> Through Europe to the Ætolian shore,
> The pageant of his bleeding heart?

Ask any man born in the fifties, or even the later forties, what he thinks of Byron's Titan agony, and his features will probably wear a smile. Insist upon his giving his opinion about the pageant of the Childe's bleeding heart, and more likely than not he will laugh outright.[1] But, I repeat, how interesting to be able to tell the age of one distinguished poet from his way of writing of another!

So, too, with books. Miss Austen's novels are dateless things. Nobody in his senses would speak of them as "old novels." *John Inglesant* is an old

[1] But if the question were now to be put to a man born in the nineties of the last century he will probably neither smile nor laugh.

novel, so is *Ginx's Baby*. But *Emma* is quite new, and, like a wise woman, affords few clues as to her age. But when, taking up *Sense and Sensibility*, we read Marianne Dashwood's account of her sister's lover—

"And besides all this, I am afraid, mamma, he has no real taste. Music seems scarcely to attract him, and though he admires Elinor's drawings very much, it is not the admiration of a person who can understand their worth. He admires as a lover, and not as a connoisseur. Oh, mamma! how spiritless, how tame was Edward's manner in reading last night! I felt for my sister most severely. I could hardly keep my seat to hear those beautiful lines which have frequently almost driven me wild, pronounced with such impenetrable calmness, such dreadful indifference!" "He would certainly" (says Mrs. Dashwood) "have done more justice to simple and elegant prose. I thought so, at the time, but you *would* give him Cowper." "Nay, mamma, if he is not to be animated by Cowper!"—when we read this, we know pretty well when Miss Austen was born. It is surely pleasant to be reminded of a time when sentimental girls used Cowper as a test of a lover's sensibility. One of our modern swains is no more likely to be condemned as a Philistine for not reading *The Task* with unction, than he is to be hung for sheep-stealing, or whipped at the cart's tail for speaking evil of constituted authorities; but the position probably still has its perils, and the Marianne Dashwoods of the hour are quite capable of putting their admirers on to *Rose Mary*, or *The Blessed Damosel* and then flouting their

insensibility. The fact, of course, is, that each generation has a way of its own, and poets are interesting because they are the mirrors in which their generation saw its own face; and what is more, they are magic mirrors, since they retain the power of reflecting the image long after what was pleased to call itself the substance has disappeared into thin air.

There is no more interesting poet than Cowper, and hardly one the area of whose influence was greater. No man, it is unnecessary to say, courted popularity less, yet he threw a very wide net, and caught a great shoal of readers. For twenty years after the publication of *The Task* in 1785, his general popularity never flagged, and even when in the eyes of the world it was eclipsed, when Cowper became, in the opinion of fierce Byronians and moss-trooping Northerners, "a coddled Pope" and a milksop, our great, sober, Puritan middle-class took him to their warm firesides for two generations more. Some amongst these were not, it must be owned, lovers of poetry at all; they liked Cowper because he is full of a peculiar kind of religious phraseology, just as some of Burns's countrymen love Burns because he is full of a peculiar kind of strong drink called whisky. This was bad taste; but it made Cowper all the more interesting, as he thus became, by a kind of compulsion, the favourite because the only poet of all these people's children; and the children of the righteous do not wither like the green herb, neither do they beg their bread from door to door, but they live in slated houses and are known to read at times. No doubt, by the time it came to these

children's children the spell was broken, and Cowper went out of fashion when Sunday travelling and play-going came in again. But his was a long run, and under peculiar conditions. Signs and tokens are now abroad, whereby the judicious are beginning to infer that there is a renewed disposition to read Cowper and to love him, not for his faults, but for his great merits, his observing eye, his playful wit, his personal charm.

Hayley's *Life of Cowper* is now obsolete, though since it is adorned with vignettes by Blake it is prized by the curious. Hayley was a kind friend to Cowper, but he possessed, in a highly developed state, that aversion to the actual facts of a case which is unhappily so characteristic of the British biographer. Southey's Life is horribly long-winded and stuffed out; still, like Homer's *Iliad*, it remains the best. It was long excluded from strict circles because of its worldly tone, and also because it more than hinted that the Rev. John Newton was to blame for his mode of treating the poet's delusions. Its place was filled by the Rev. Mr. Grimshaw's Life of the poet, which is not a nice book. Mr. Benham's recent Life, to be found in the cheap Globe edition of *Cowper's Poems*, is marvellously good and compressed. Mr. Goldwin Smith's account of the poet in Mr. Morley's series could not fail to be interesting, though it created in the minds of some readers a curious sensation of immense distance from the object described. Mr. Smith seemed to discern Cowper clearly enough, but as somebody very far off. This, however, may be fancy.

The wise man will not trouble the biographers. He will make for himself a short list of dates, so

that he may know where he is at any particular time, and then, poking the fire and (his author notwithstanding) lighting his pipe—

> Oh, pernicious weed, whose scent the fair annoys—

he will read Cowper's letters. There are five volumes of them in Southey's edition. It would be to exaggerate to say you wish there were fifty, but you are, at all events, well content there should be five. In the course of them Cowper will tell you the story of his own life, as it ought to be told, as it alone can be told, in the purest of English and with the sweetest of smiles. For a combination of delightful qualities, Cowper's letters have no rivals. They are playful, witty, loving, sensible, ironical, and, above all, as easy as an old shoe. So easy, indeed, that after you have read half a volume or so, you begin to think their merits have been exaggerated, and that anybody could write letters as good as Cowper's. Even so the man who never played billiards, and who sees Mr. Roberts play that game, might hastily opine that he, too, could go and do likewise.

To form anything like a fair estimate of Cowper, it is wise to ignore as much as possible his mental disease, and always to bear in mind the manner of man he naturally was. He belonged essentially to the order of wags. He was, it is easy to see, a lover of trifling things, elegantly finished. He hated noise, contention, and the public gaze, but society he ever insisted upon.

> I praise the Frenchman, his remark was shrewd—
> How sweet, how passing sweet, is solitude!
> But grant me still a friend in my retreat,
> Whom I may whisper—"Solitude is sweet."

He loved a jest, a barrel of oysters and a bottle of wine. His well-known riddle on a kiss is Cowper from top to toe:

> I am just two and two; I am warm, I am cold,
> And the parent of numbers that cannot be told.
> I am lawful, unlawful, a duty, a fault,
> I am often sold dear, good for nothing when bought,
> An extraordinary boon, and a matter of course,
> And yielded with pleasure when taken by force.

Why, it is a perfect dictionary of kisses in six lines!

Had Cowper not gone mad in his thirty-second year, and been frightened out of the world of trifles, we should have had another Prior, a wittier Gay, an earlier Praed, an English La Fontaine. We do better with *The Task* and the *Lines to Mary*, but he had a light touch.

> 'Tis not that I design to rob
> Thee of thy birthright, gentle Bob,
> For thou art born sole heir and single
> Of dear Mat Prior's easy jingle.
> Not that I mean while thus I knit
> My threadbare sentiments together,
> To show my genius or my wit,
> When God and you know I have neither,
> Or such as might be better shown
> By letting poetry alone.

This lightness of touch, this love of trifling, never deserted Cowper, not even when the pains of hell gat hold of him, and he believed himself the especially accursed of God. In 1791, when things were very black, we find him writing to his good Dissenting friend, the Rev. William Bull ("Clarissime Taurorum"), as follows: "Homer, I say, has all my time, except a little that I give every day to no very cheering prospects of futurity. I would I were a Hottentot, or even a Dissenter, so that my views of an hereafter were more comfort-

able. But such as I am, Hope, if it please God, may visit even me. Should we ever meet again, possibly we may part no more. Then, if Presbyterians ever find their way to heaven, you and I may know each other in that better world, and rejoice in the recital of the terrible things that we endured in this. I will wager sixpence with you now, that when that day comes you shall acknowledge my story a more wonderful one than yours; only order your executors to put sixpence in your mouth when they bury you, that you may have wherewithal to pay me."

Whilst living in the Temple, which he did for twelve years, chiefly, it would appear, on his capital, he associated with a race of men, of whom report has reached us, called "wits." He belonged to the Nonsense Club; he wrote articles for magazines. He went to balls, to Brighton, to the play. He went once, at all events, to the gallery of the House of Commons, where he witnessed an altercation between a placeman and an alderman—two well-known types still in our midst. The placeman had misquoted Terence, and the alderman had corrected him; whereupon the ready placeman thanked the worthy alderman for teaching him Latin, and volunteered in exchange to teach the alderman English. Cowper must at this time have been a considerable reader, for all through life he is to be found quoting his authors, poets, and playwrights, with an easy appositeness, all the more obviously genuine because he had no books in the country to refer to. "I have no English History," he writes, "except Baker's *Chronicle*, and that I borrowed three years ago from Mr. Throckmorton." This was wrong, but Baker's

Chronicle (Sir Roger de Coverley's favourite Sunday reading) is not a book to be returned in a month.

After this easy fashion Cowper acquired what never left him—the style and manner of an accomplished worldling.

The story of the poet's life does not need telling; but as Owen Meredith says, probably not even for the second time, "after all, old things are best." Cowper was born in the rectory at Great Berkhampstead, in 1735. His mother dying when he was six years old, he was despatched to a country academy, where he was horribly bullied by one of the boys, the reality of whose persecution is proved by one terrible touch in his victim's account of it: "I had such a dread of him, that I did not dare lift my eyes to his face. I knew him best by his shoe-buckle." The odious brute! Cowper goes on to say he had forgiven him, which I can believe, but when he proceeds to ejaculate a wish to meet his persecutor again in heaven, doubt creeps in. When ten years old he was sent to Westminster, where there is nothing to show that he was otherwise than fairly happy; he took to his classics very kindly, and (so he says) excelled in cricket and football. This is evidence, but as Dr. Johnson once confessed about the evidence for the immortality of the soul, "one would like more." He was for some time in the class of Vincent Bourne, who, though born in 1695, and a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, ranks high amongst the Latin poets. Whether Cowper was bullied at Westminster is a matter of controversy. Bourne was bullied. About that there can be no doubt. Cowper loved him, and relates with delight how on one occasion

the Duke of Richmond (Burke's Duke, I suppose) set fire to the greasy locks of this latter-day Catullus, and then, alarmed at the spread of the conflagration, boxed his master's ears to put it out. At eighteen Cowper left Westminster, and after doing nothing (at which he greatly excelled) for nine months in the country, returned to town, and was articled to an attorney in Ely Place, Holborn, for three years. At the same time, being intended for the Bar, he was entered at the Middle, though he subsequently migrated to the Inner Temple. These three years in Ely Place Cowper fribbled away agreeably enough. He had as his desk-companion Edward Thurlow, the most tremendous of men. Hard by Ely Place is Southampton Row, and in Southampton Row lived Ashley Cowper, the poet's uncle, with a trio of affable daughters, Theodora Jane, Harriet, afterwards Lady Hesketh, and a third, who became the wife of Sir Archer Croft. According to Cowper, a great deal of giggling went on in Southampton Row. He fell in love with Theodora, and Theodora fell in love with him. He wrote her verses enough to fill a volume. She was called Delia in his lays. In 1752, his articles having expired, he took chambers in the Temple, and in 1754 was called to the Bar. Ashley Cowper, a very little man, who used to wear a white hat lined with yellow silk, and was on that account likened by his nephew to a mushroom, would not hear of his daughter marrying her cousin; and being a determined little man, he had his own way, and the lovers were parted and saw one another no more. Theodora Cowper wore the willow all the rest of her long life. Her

interest in her cousin never abated. Through her sister, Lady Hesketh, she contributed in later years generously to his support. He took the money and knew where it came from, but they never wrote to one another, nor does her name ever appear in Cowper's correspondence. She became, so it is said, morbid on the subject during her latter days, and dying twenty-four years after her lover, she bequeathed to a nephew a mysterious packet she was known to cherish. It was found to contain Cowper's love-verses.

In 1756 Cowper's father died, and the poet's patrimony proved to be a very small one. He was made a Commissioner of Bankrupts. The salary was £60 a year. He knew one solicitor, but whether he ever had a brief is not known. He lived alone in his chambers till 1763, when, under well-known circumstances, he went raving mad, and attempted to hang himself in his bedroom, and very nearly succeeded. He was removed to Dr. Cotton's asylum, where he remained a year. This madness, which in its origin had no more to do with religion than it had with the Binomial Theorem, ultimately took the turn of believing that it was the will of God that he should kill himself, and that as he had failed to do so he was damned everlastingly. In this faith, diversified by doubt, Cowper must be said henceforth to have lived and died.

On leaving St. Albans, the poet, in order to be near his only brother, the Rev. John Cowper, Fellow of Corpus, Cambridge, and a most delightful man, had lodgings in Huntingdon; and there, one eventful Tuesday in 1765, he made the acquaintance of Mary Unwin. Mrs. Unwin's husband,

a most scandalously non-resident clergyman — whom, however, Cowper composedly calls a veritable Parson Adams—was living at this time, not in his Norfolk rectory of Grimston, but contentedly enough in Huntingdon, where he took pupils. Cowper became a lodger in the family, which consisted of the rector and his wife, a son at Cambridge, and a daughter, also one or two pupils. In 1767 Mr. Unwin was thrown from his horse and fractured his skull. Church-reformers pointed out, at the time, that had the Rector of Grimston been resident, this accident could not have occurred in Huntingdon. They then went on to say, but less convincingly, that Mr. Unwin's death was the judgment of Heaven upon him. Mr. Unwin dead, the poet and the widow moved to Olney, where they lived together for nineteen years in a tumble-down house, and on very slender means. Their attraction to Olney was in the fact that John Newton was curate-in-charge. Olney was not an ideal place by any means. Cowper and Mrs. Unwin lived in no fools' paradise, for they visited the poor and knew the manner of their lives. The inhabitants were mostly engaged in lace-making and straw-plaiting; they were miserably poor, immoral, and drunken. There is no idyllic nonsense in Cowper's poetry.

In 1773 he had another most violent attack of suicidal mania, and attempted his life more than once. Writing in 1786 to Lady Hesketh, Cowper gives her an account of his illness, of which at the time she knew nothing, as her acquaintance with her cousin was not renewed till 1785:

> Know then, that in the year '73, the same scene that was acted at St. Albans opened upon me again at Olney, only

covered with a still deeper shade of melancholy, and ordained to be of much longer duration. I believed that everybody hated me, and that Mrs. Unwin hated me most of all; was convinced that all my food was poisoned, together with ten thousand megrims of the same stamp. Dr. Cotton was consulted. He replied that he could do no more for me than might be done at Olney, but recommended particular vigilance, lest I should attempt my life; a caution for which there was the greatest occasion. At the same time that I was convinced of Mrs. Unwin's aversion to me, I could endure no other companion. The whole management of me consequently devolved upon her, and a terrible task she had; she performed it, however, with a cheerfulness hardly ever equalled on such an occasion, and I have often heard her say that if ever she praised God in her life, it was when she found she was to have all the labour. She performed it accordingly, but as I hinted once before, very much to the hurt of her own constitution.

Just before this outbreak, Cowper and Mrs. Unwin had agreed to marry, but after it they felt the subject was not to be approached, and so the poor things spoke of it no more. Still, it was well they had spoken out. "Love me, and tell me so," is a wise maxim of behaviour.

Stupid people, themselves leading, one is glad to believe, far duller lives than Cowper and Mary Unwin, have been known to make dull, ponderous jokes about this *ménage* at Olney—its country walks, its hymn tunes, its religious exercises. But it is pleasant to note how quick Sainte-Beuve, whose three papers on Cowper are amongst the glories of the *Causeries du Lundi*, is to recognise how much happiness and pleasantness was to be got out of this semi-monastic life and close social relation. Cowper was indeed the very man for it. One can apply to him his own well-known lines about the winter season, and crown him

> King of intimate delights,
> Fireside enjoyments, homeborn happiness.

No doubt he went mad at times. It was a terrible affliction. But how many men have complaints of the liver, and are as cheerful to live with as the Black Death, or Young's *Night Thoughts*. Cowper had a famous constitution. Not even Dr. James's powder, or the murderous practices of the faculty, could undermine it. Sadness is not dullness.

> Dear saints, it is not sorrow, as I hear,
> Nor suffering that shuts up eye and ear
> To all which has delighted them before,
> And lets us be what we were once no more!
> No! we may suffer deeply, yet retain
> Power to be moved and soothed, for all our pain,
> By what of old pleased us, and will again.
> No! 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,
> In whose hot air our spirits are upcurled
> Until they crumble, or else grow like steel,
> Which kills in us the bloom, the youth, the spring,
> Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,
> But takes away the power—this can avail,
> By drying up our joy in everything,
> To make our former pleasures all seem stale.

I can think of no one to whom these beautiful lines of Mr. Arnold's are so exquisitely appropriate as to Cowper. Nothing could knock the humanity out of him. Solitude, sorrow, madness found him out, threw him down and tore him, as did the devils their victims in the days of old; but when they left him for a season, he rose from his misery as sweet and as human, as interested and as interesting as ever. His descriptions of natural scenery and country-side doings are amongst his best things. He moralises enough, heaven knows! but he keeps his morality out of his descriptions. This is rather a relief after overdoses of Wordsworth's pantheism and Keats's paganism. Cowper's Nature is plain county Bucks.

> The sheepfold here
> Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe.
> At first progressive as a stream, they seek
> The middle field; but scattered by degrees,
> Each to his choice, soon whiten all the land.

The man who wrote that had his eye on the object; but lest the quotation be thought too woolly by a generation which has a passion for fine things, I will allow myself another:

> Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds,
> Exhilarate the spirit and restore
> The tone of languid nature, mighty winds
> That sweep the skirt of some far-spreading wood
> Of ancient growth, make music not unlike
> The dash of ocean on his winding shore
>
> . . . . . .
>
> . . . . . of rills that slip
> Through the cleft rock, and chiming as they fall
> Upon loose pebbles, lose themselves at length
> In matted grass, that with a livelier green
> Betrays the secret of their silent course.

In 1781 began the episode of Lady Austen. That lady was doing some small shopping in Olney, in company with her sister, the wife of a neighbouring clergyman, when our poet first beheld her. She pleased his eye. Whether, in the words of one of his early poems, he made free to comment on her shape I cannot say; but he hurried home and made Mrs. Unwin ask her to tea. She came. Cowper was seized with a fit of shyness, and very nearly would not go into the room. He conquered the fit, went in and swore eternal friendship. To the very end of her days Mrs. Unwin addressed the poet, her true lover though he was, as "Mr. Cowper." In a week, Lady Austen and he were "Sister Ann" and "William" one to another. Sister Ann had a furnished house in London. She gave it up. She

came to live in Olney, next door. She was pretty, she was witty, she played, she sang. She told Cowper the story of John Gilpin, she inspired his *Wreck of the "Royal George."* *The Task* was written at her bidding. Day in and day out, Cowper and Lady Austen and Mrs. Unwin were together. One turns instinctively to see what Sainte-Beuve has to say about Lady Austen. "C'était Lady Austen, veuve d'un baronet. Cette rare personne était douée des plus heureux dons; elle n'était plus très-jeune ni dans la fleur de beauté; elle avait ce qui est mieux, une puissance d'attraction et d'enchantement qui tenait à la transparence de l'âme, une faculté de reconnaissance, de sensibilité émue jusqu'aux larmes pour toute marque de bienveillance dont elle était l'objet. Tout en elle exprimait une vivacité pure, innocente et tendre. C'était une créature *sympathique*, et elle devait tout-à-fait justifier dans le cas présent ce mot de Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: 'Il y a dans la femme une gaîté légère qui dissipe la tristesse de l'homme.'"

That odd personage, Alexander Knox, who had what used to be called a "primitive," that is, a fourth-century mind, and on whom the Tractarian movement has been plausibly grandfathered, and who was (incongruously) employed by Lord Castlereagh to help through the Act of Union with Ireland, of which we have lately heard, but who remained all the time primitively unaware that any corruption was going on around him—this odd person, I say, was exercised in his mind about Lady Austen, of whom he had been reading in Hayley's Life. In October 1806 he writes to

Bishop Jebb in a solemn strain: "I have rather a severer idea of Lady A. than I should wish to put into writing for publication. I almost suspect she was a very artful woman. But I need not enlarge." He puts it rather differently from Sainte-Beuve, but I dare say they both meant much the same thing. If Knox meant more it would be necessary to get angry with him. That Lady Austen fell in love with Cowper and would have liked to marry him, but found Mrs. Unwin in the way, is probable enough; but where was the artfulness? Poor Cowper was no catch. The grandfather of Tractarianism would have been better employed in unmasking the corruption amongst which he had lived, than in darkly suspecting a lively lady of designs upon a penniless poet, living in the utmost obscurity on the charity of his relatives.[1]

But this state of things at Olney did not last very long. "Of course not," cackle a chorus of cynics. "It could not!" The Historical Muse, ever averse to theory, is content to say, "It did not," but as she writes the words she smiles. The episode began in 1781, it ended in 1784. It became necessary to part. Cowper may have had his

[1] In the fourth volume of Knox's *Remains*, in a note on p. 539, is to be found Lord Castlereagh's very strange letter urging Knox to become the historian and apologist of the Union. "And I really think it would come with great advantage before the world in your name, as you are known to be incapable of stating what you do not believe to be true." "But," says Knox himself, "though I was well acquainted with the spirit and intention which actuated Lord C. at that time (and I may truly say all the persons in power), yet the evidence I could bear would be limited to my own honest impressions, for of the details of measures or exigencies I could from memory state nothing." But to get a nervous saint to puff the Union was a good idea.

qualms, but he concealed them manfully and remained faithful to Mrs. Unwin—

> The patient flower
> Who possessed his darker hour.

Lady Austen flew away, and afterwards, as if to prove her levity incurable, married a Frenchman. She died in 1802. English literature owes her a debt of gratitude. Her name is writ large over much that is best in Cowper's poetry. Not, indeed, over the very best; *that* bears the inscription *To Mary*. And it was right that it should be so, for Mrs. Unwin had to put up with a good deal.

The Task and *John Gilpin* were published together in 1785, and some of Cowper's old friends (notably Lady Hesketh) rallied round the now known poet once more. Lady Hesketh soon begins to fill the chair vacated by Lady Austen, and Cowper's letters to her are amongst his most delightful. Her visits to Olney were eagerly expected, and it was she who persuaded the pair to leave the place for good and all, and move to Weston, which they did in 1786. The following year Cowper went mad again, and made another most desperate attempt upon his life. Again Mary Unwin stood by the poor maniac's side, and again she stood alone. He got better, and worked away at his translation of Homer as hard and wrote letters as charming as ever. But Mrs. Unwin was pretty well done for. Cowper published his *Homer* by subscription, and must be pronounced a dab hand in the somewhat ignoble art of collecting subscribers. I am not sure that he could not have given Pope points. Pope had a great acquaintance, but he had barely six hundred

subscribers. Cowper scraped together upwards of five hundred. As a beggar he was unabashed. He quotes in one of his letters, and applies to himself, patly enough, Ranger's observation in *The Suspicious Husband*: "There is a degree of assurance in you modest men, that we impudent fellows can never arrive at!" The University of Oxford was, however, too much for him. He beat her portals in vain. She had but one answer, "We subscribe to nothing." Cowper was very angry, and called her "a rich old vixen." She did not mind. The book appeared in 1791. It has many merits, and remains unread.

The clouds now gathered heavily over the biography of Cowper. Mrs. Unwin had two paralytic strokes; the old friends began to torture one another. She was silent save when she was irritable, indifferent except when exacting. At last, not a day too soon, Lady Hesketh came to Weston. They were moved into Norfolk—but why prolong the tale? Mrs. Unwin died at East Dereham on the 17th of December, 1796. Thirty-one years had gone since the poet and she first met by chance in Huntingdon. Cowper himself died in April, 1800. His last days were made physically comfortable by the kindness of some Norfolk cousins, and the devotion of a Miss Perowne. But he died in wretchedness and gloom.

The *Castaway* was his last original poem:

I therefore purpose not or dream,
Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
A more enduring date;
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

Everybody interested in Cowper has of course to make out, as best he may, a picture of the poet for his own use. It is curious how sometimes little scraps of things serve to do this better than deliberate efforts. In 1800, the year of Cowper's death, his relative, a Dr. Johnson, wrote a letter to John Newton, sending good wishes to the old gentleman, and to his niece, Miss Catlett; and added: "Poor dear Mr. Cowper, oh that he were as tolerable as he was, even in those days when, dining at his house in Buckinghamshire with you and that lady, I could not help smiling to see his pleasant face when he said, 'Miss Catlett, shall I give you a piece of cutlet?'" It was a very small joke indeed, and it is a very humble little quotation, but for me it has long served, in the mind's eye, for a vignette of the poet, doomed yet *débonnaire*. Romney's picture, with that frightful nightcap and eyes gleaming with madness, is a pestilent thing one would forget if one could. Cowper's pleasant face when he said, "Miss Catlett, shall I give you a piece of cutlet?" is a much more agreeable picture to find a small corner for in one's memory.

RICHARD CUMBERLAND

1894

"HE has written comedies at which we have cried and tragedies at which we have laughed; he has composed indecent novels and religious epics; he has pandered to the public lust for personal anecdote by writing his own life and the private history of his acquaintances." Of whom is this a portrait, and who is the limner? What are the names of the comedies and the tragedies and the novels thus highly recommended to the curious reader? These are questions, I flatter myself, wholly devoid of public interest.

The quotation is from a review in the *Quarterly*, written by Sir Walter Scott, of old Richard Cumberland's last novel, *John de Lancaster*, published in 1809, when its author, "the Terence of England," was well-nigh eighty years of age. The passage is a fierce one, but Scott's good-nature was proof against everything but affectation. No man minded a bad novel less than the author of *Guy Mannering* and *The Heart of Midlothian*. I am certain he could have pulled Bishop Thirlwall through *The Wide, Wide World*, in the middle of which, for some unaccountable reason, that great novel-reading prelate stuck fast. But an author had only to pooh-pooh the public taste, to sneer at popularity, to discourse solemnly on his function as a teacher of his age and master of his craft, to make Sir Walter show his teeth, and his fangs

were formidable; and the storm of his wrath all the more tremendous because bursting from a clear sky.

I will quote a few words from the passage in *John de Lancaster* which made Scott so angry, and which he pronounced a doleful lamentation over the "praise and pudding which Cumberland alleges have been gobbled up by his contemporaries":

> If in the course of my literary labours I had been less studious to adhere to nature and simplicity, I am perfectly convinced I should have stood higher in estimation with the purchasers of copyright, and probably have been read and patronised by my contemporaries in the proportion of ten to one.

It seems a harmless kind of bleat after all, but it was enough to sting Scott to fury, and make him fall upon the old man in a manner somewhat too savage and tartarly. Some years later, and after Cumberland was dead, Sir Walter wrote a sketch of his life in the vein we are better accustomed to associate with the name of Scott.

Cumberland was a voluminous author, having written two epics, thirty-eight dramatic pieces, including a revised version of *Timon of Athens*—of which Horace Walpole said, "he has caught the manners and diction of the original so exactly that I think it is full as bad a play as it was before he corrected it"—a score or two of fugitive poetical compositions, including some verses to Dr. James, whose powders played almost as large a part in the lives of men of that time as Garrick himself, numerous prose publications and three novels, *Arundel*, *Henry*, and *John de Lancaster*. Of the novels, *Henry* is the one to which Sir Walter's epitaph is least inapplicable—but Cumberland

meant no harm. Were I to be discovered on Primrose Hill, or any other eminence, reading *Henry*, I should blush no deeper than if the book had been *David Grieve*.

Cumberland has, of course, no place in men's memories by virtue of his plays, poems, or novels. Even the catholic Chambers gives no extracts from Cumberland in the *Encyclopedia*. What keeps him for ever alive is—first, his place in Goldsmith's great poem, *Retaliation*; secondly, his memoirs, to which Sir Walter refers so unkindly; and thirdly, the tradition—the well-supported tradition—that he was the original Sir Fretful Plagiary.

On this last point we have the authority of Croker, and there is none better for anything disagreeable. Croker says he knew Cumberland well for the last dozen years of his life, and that to his last day he resembled Sir Fretful.

The Memoirs were first published in 1806, in a splendidly printed quarto. The author wanted money badly, and Lackington's house gave him £500 for his manuscript. It is an excellent book. I do not quarrel with Mr. Leslie Stephen's description of it in the *National Dictionary of Biography*: "A very loose book, dateless, inaccurate, but with interesting accounts of men of note." All I mean by excellent is excellent to read. The Memoirs touch upon many points of interest. Cumberland was born in the Master's Lodge, at Trinity, Cambridge, in the Judge's Chamber—a room hung round with portraits of "hanging judges" in their official robes, and where a great Anglican divine and preacher once told me he had passed a sleepless night, so scared was he by these sinful emblems

of human justice. There is an admirable account in Cumberland's Memoirs of his maternal grandfather, the famous Richard Bentley, and of the Vice-Master, Dr. Walker, fit to be read along with De Quincey's spirited essay on the same subject. Then the scene is shifted to Dublin Castle, where Cumberland was Ulster-Secretary when Halifax was Lord-Lieutenant, and Single-speech Hamilton had acquired by purchase (for a brief season) the brains of Edmund Burke. There is a wonderful sketch of Bubb Dodington and his villa "La Trappe," on the banks of the Thames, whither one fair evening Wedderburn brought Mrs. Haughton in a hackney-coach. You read of Dr. Johnson and Dr. Goldsmith, of Garrick and Foote, and participate in the bustle and malice of the playhouse. Unluckily, Cumberland was sent to Spain on a mission, and came home with a grievance. This part is dull, but in all other respects the Memoirs are good to read.

Cumberland's father, who became an Irish bishop, is depicted by his son as a most pleasing character; and no doubt of his having been so would ever have entered a head always disposed to think well of fathers had not my copy of the Memoirs been annotated throughout in the nervous, scholarly hand of a long-previous owner who, for some reason or another, hated the Cumberlands, the Whig clergy, and the Irish people with a hatred which found ample room and verge enough in the spacious margins of the Memoirs.

I print one only of these splenetic notes:

I forget whether I have noticed this elsewhere, therefore I will make sure. In the novel *Arundel*, Cumberland has

drawn an exact picture of himself as secretary to Halifax, and has made the father of the hero a clergyman and a keen electioneerer—the vilest character in fiction. The laborious exculpation of Parson Cumberland in these Memoirs does not wipe out the scandal of such a picture. In spite of all he says, we cannot help suspecting that Parson Cumberland and Joseph Arundel had a likeness. N.B.—In both novels (*i.e.*, *Arundel* and *Henry*) the portrait of a modern clergyman is too true. But it is strange that Cumberland, thus hankering after the Church, should have volunteered two such characters as Joseph Arundel and Claypole.

"Whispering tongues can poison truth," and a persistent annotator who writes a legible hand is not easily shaken off.

Perhaps the best story in the book is the one about which there is most doubt. I refer to the well-known and often-quoted account of the first night of *She Stoops to Conquer*, and of the famous band of *claqueurs* who early took their places, determined to see the play through. Cumberland tells the story with the irresistible verve of falsehood—of the early dinner at the "Shakespeare Tavern," "where Samuel Johnson took the chair at the head of a long table, and was the life and soul of the corps"; of the guests assembled, including Fitzherbert (who had committed suicide at an earlier date), of the adjournment to the theatre with Adam Drummond of amiable memory, who "was gifted by Nature with the most sonorous and at the same time the most contagious laugh that ever echoed from the human lungs. The neighing of the horse of the son of Hystaspes was a whisper to it; the whole thunder of the theatre could not drown it"; and on the story rolls.

It has to be given up. There was a dinner, but it is doubtful whether Cumberland was at it; and as for the proceedings at the theatre, others who

were there have pronounced Cumberland's story a bit of *blague*. According to the newspapers of the day, Cumberland, instead of sitting by Drummond's side and telling him when to laugh in his peculiar manner, was visibly chagrined by the success of the piece, and as wretched as any man could well be. But Adam Drummond must have been a reality. His laugh still echoes in one's ears.

HANNAH MORE

1894

AN ingenious friend of mine, who has collected a library in which every book is either a masterpiece of wit or a miracle of rarity, found great fault with me the other day for adding to my motley heap the writings of Mrs. Hannah More. In vain I pleaded I had given but eight shillings and sixpence for the nineteen volumes, neatly bound and lettered on the back. He was not thinking, so he protested, of my purse, but of my taste, and he went away, spurning the gravel under his feet, irritated that there should be such men as I.

I, however, am prepared to brazen it out. I freely admit that the celebrated Mrs. Hannah More is one of the most detestable writers that ever held a pen. She flounders like a huge conger-eel in an ocean of dingy morality. She may have been a wit in her youth, though I am not aware of any evidence of it—certainly her poem, *Bas Bleu*, is none—but for all the rest of her days, and they were many, she was an encyclopædia of all literary vices. You may search her nineteen volumes through without lighting upon one original thought, one happy phrase. Her religion lacks reality. Not a single expression of genuine piety, of heart-felt emotion, ever escapes her lips. She is never pathetic, never terrible. Her creed is powerless either to

attract the well-disposed or make the guilty tremble. No naughty child ever read *The Fairchild Family* or *Stories from the Church Catechism* without quaking and quivering like a short-haired puppy after a ducking; but then Mrs. Sherwood was a woman of genius, whilst Mrs. Hannah More was a pompous failure.

Still, she has a merit of her own, just enough to enable a middle-aged man to chew the cud of reflection as he hastily turns her endless pages. She is an explanatory author, helping you to understand how sundry people who were old when you were young came to be the folk they were, and to have the books upon their shelves they had.

Hannah More was the first, and I trust the worst, of a large class—"the ugliest of her daughters Hannah," if I may parody a poet she affected to admire. This class may be imperfectly described as "the well-to-do Christian." It inhabited snug places in the country, and kept an excellent, if not dainty, table. The money it saved in a ballroom it spent upon a greenhouse. Its horses were fat, and its coachman invariably present at family prayers. Its pet virtue was Church twice on Sunday, and its peculiar horrors theatrical entertainments, dancing, and threepenny points. Outside its garden wall lived the poor who, if virtuous, were for ever curtsying to the ground or wearing neat uniforms, except when expiring upon truckle-beds beseeching God to bless the young ladies of The Grange or the Manor House, as the case might be.

As a book *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife* is as odious as it is absurd—yet for the reason already assigned it may be read with a certain curiosity—but as it

would be cruelty to attempt to make good my point by quotation, I must leave it as it is.

It is characteristic of the unreality of Hannah More that she prefers Akenside to Cowper, despite the latter's superior piety. Cowper's sincerity and pungent satire frightened her; the verbosity of Akenside was much to her mind:

> Sir John is a passionate lover of poetry, in which he has a fine taste. He read it [a passage from Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination*] with much spirit and feeling, especially these truly classical lines:
>
> *Mind, mind* alone—bear witness, earth and heaven—
> The living fountains in itself contains
> Of Beauteous and Sublime; here hand in hand
> Sit paramount the graces; here enthroned
> Celestial Venus, with divinest airs,
> Invites the soul to never-fading joy.
>
> "The reputation of this exquisite passage," said he, laying down the book, "is established by the consenting suffrage of all men of taste, though, by the critical countenance you are beginning to put on you look as if you had a mind to attack it."
>
> "So far from it," said I [Cœlebs], "*that I know nothing more splendid in the whole mass of our poetry.*"

Miss More had an odd life before she underwent what she calls a "revolution in her sentiments," a revolution, however, which I fear left her heart of hearts unchanged. She consorted with wits, though always, be it fairly admitted, on terms of decorum. She wrote three tragedies, which were not rejected as they deserved to be, but duly appeared on the boards of London and Bath with prologues and epilogues by Garrick and by Sheridan. She dined and supped and made merry. She had a prodigious flirtation with Dr. Johnson, who called her a saucy girl, albeit she was thirty-seven; and once, for there was no end to his waggery,

lamented she had not married Chatterton, "that posterity might have seen a propagation of poets." The good doctor, however, sickened of her flattery, and one of the rudest speeches even he ever made was addressed to her.

After Johnson's death Hannah met Boswell, full of his intended book, which she did her best to spoil with her oily fatuity. Said she to Boswell, "I beseech your tenderness for our virtuous and most revered departed friend; I beg you will mitigate some of his asperities," to which diabolical counsel the Inimitable replied roughly, "He would not cut off his claws nor make a tiger a cat to please anybody."

The most moving incident in Hannah More's life occurred near its close, and when she was a lone, lorn woman—her sisters Mary, Betty, Sally, and Patty having all predeceased her. She and they had long lived in a nice house or "place" called Barley Wood, in the neighbourhood of Bristol, and here her sisters one after another died, leaving poor Hannah in solitary grandeur to the tender mercies of Mrs. Susan, the housekeeper; Miss Teddy, the lady's-maid; Mrs. Rebecca, the housemaid; Mrs. Jane, the cook; Miss Sally, the scullion; Mr. Timothy, the coachman; Mr. John, the gardener; and Mr. Tom, the gardener's man. Eight servants and one aged pilgrim—of such was the household of Barley Wood!

Outwardly decorum reigned. Poor Miss More fondly imagined her domestics doted on her, and that they joyfully obeyed her laws. It was the practice at family prayer for each of the servants to repeat a text. Visitors were much impressed,

and went away delighted. But like so many other things on this round world, it was all hollow. These menials were not what they seemed.

After Miss More had heard them say their texts and had gone to bed, their day began. They gave parties to the servants and tradespeople of the vicinity (pleasing word), and at last, in mere superfluity of naughtiness, hired a large room a mile off and issued invitations to a great ball. This undid them. There happened to be at Barley Wood on the very night of the dance a vigilant visitor who had her suspicions, and who accordingly kept watch and ward. She heard the texts, but she did not go to bed, and from her window she saw the whole household, under cover of night, steal off to their promiscuous friskings, leaving behind them poor Miss Sally only, whose sad duty it was to let them in the next morning, which she duly performed.

Friends were called in and grave consultations held, and in the end Miss More was told how she had been wounded in her own household. It was sore news; she bore it well, wisely determined to quit Barley Wood once and for ever, and live, as a decent old lady should, in a terrace in Clifton. The wicked servants were not told of this resolve until the actual moment of departure had arrived, when they were summoned into the drawing-room, where they found their mistress and a company of friends. In feeling tones Miss Hannah More upbraided them for their unfaithfulness. "You have driven me," said she, "from my own home, and forced me to seek a refuge among strangers." So saying, she stepped into her carriage and was

driven away. There is surely something Miltonic about this scene, which is, at all events, better than anything in Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination.*

The old lady was of course much happier at No. 4, Windsor Terrace, Clifton, than she had been at Barley Wood. She was eighty-three years of age when she took up house there, and eighty-nine when she died, which she did on the 1st of September, 1833. I am indebted for these melancholy —and, I believe, veracious—particulars to that amusing book of Joseph Cottle's called *Early Recollections, chiefly relating to the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge during his long residence in Bristol.*

I still maintain that Hannah More's works in nineteen volumes are worth eight shillings and sixpence.

ARTHUR YOUNG

1906

THE name of Arthur Young is a familiar one to all readers of that history which begins with the forebodings of the French Revolution. Thousands of us learnt to be interested in him as the "good Arthur," "the excellent Arthur," of Thomas Carlyle, a writer who had the art of making not only his own narrative, but the sources of it, attractive. Even "Carrion-Heath," in the famous introductory chapter to the *Cromwell*, is invested with a kind of charm, whilst in the stormy firmament of the *French Revolution* the star of Arthur Young twinkles with a mild effulgency. The autobiography of such a man could hardly fail to be interesting.[1] The "good Arthur" was born in 1741, the younger son of a small "squarson" who inherited from his father the manor of Bradfield Combust, in Suffolk, but held the living of Thames Ditton. Here he made the acquaintance of the Onslow family, and Speaker Onslow was one of Arthur's godfathers. The Rev. Dr. Young died in 1759, much in debt. The Bradfield property had been settled for life on his wife, who had brought her husband some fortune, and to the manor-house she retired to economise.

[1] *The Autobiography of Arthur Young.* Edited by M. Betham Edwards. Smith, Elder and Co.

Arthur's education had been muddled; and an attempt to make a merchant of him having fallen through, he found himself, on his father's death, aged eighteen, "without education, profession, or employment," and his whole fortune, during his mother's life, consisting of a copyhold farm of twenty acres, producing as many pounds. In these circumstances, to think of literature was well-nigh inevitable, and, in 1762, the autobiography tells us:

> I set on foot a periodical publication, entitled the *Universal Museum*, which came out monthly, printed with glorious imprudence on my own account. I waited on Dr. Johnson, who was sitting by the fire so half-dressed and slovenly a figure as to make me stare at him. I stated my plan, and begged that he would favour me with a paper once a month, offering at the same time any remuneration that he might name.

Here we see dimly prefigured a modern editor prematurely soliciting the support of Great Names. But the Cham of literature, himself the son of a bookseller, would have none of it.

> "No, sir," he replied; "such a work would be sure to fail if the booksellers have not the property, and you will lose a great deal of money by it."
>
> "Certainly, sir," I said, "if I am not fortunate enough to induce authors of real talent to contribute."
>
> "No, sir, you are mistaken; such authors will not support such a work, nor will you persuade them to write in it. You will purchase disappointment by the loss of your money, and I advise you by all means to give up the plan."
>
> Somebody was introduced, and I took my leave.

The *Universal Museum*, none the less, appeared, but after five numbers Young "procured a meeting of ten or a dozen booksellers, and had the luck and address to persuade them to take the whole scheme upon themselves." He then calmly adds,

"I believe no success ever attended it." It was, indeed, 100 years before its time. Literature abandoned, Young took one of his mother's farms. "I had no more idea of farming than of physic or divinity," nor did he, man of European reputation as a farmer though he soon became, ever make farming pay. He had an itching pen, and after four years' farming (1763–1766) he published the result of his experience. Never, surely, before has an author spoken of his first-born as in the autobiography Young speaks of this publication:

> And the circumstance which perhaps of all others in my life I most deeply regretted and considered as a sin of the blackest dye was the publishing of my experience during these four years, which, speaking as a farmer, was nothing but ignorance, folly, presumption, and rascality.

None the less, it was writing this rascally book that seems to have given him the idea of those agricultural tours which were to make his name famous throughout the world. His Southern tour was in 1767, his Northern in 1768, and his Eastern in 1770. The subject he specially illuminated in these epoch-making books was the rotation of crops, though he occasionally diverged upon deep-ploughing and kindred themes. The tours excited, for the first time, the agricultural spirit of Great Britain, and their author almost at once became a celebrated man.

In 1765 Young married the wrong woman, and started upon a career of profound matrimonial discomfort, and even misery; a blunt, truthful writer, he makes no bones about it. It was an unhappy marriage from its beginning in 1765 to its end in 1815. Young himself, though by no

means vivacious in this autobiography, where he frankly complains of himself as having no more wit than a fig, was a very popular person with all classes and both sexes. He was an enormous diner-out, and his authority as an agriculturist, united to his undeniable charm as a companion, threw open to him all the great places in the country. But his finances were a perpetual trouble. On carrot seeds and cabbages he was an authority, but from 1766 to 1775 his income never exceeded £300 a year. He had an excellent mother, whom he dearly loved, and who with the characteristic bluntness of the family bade him think less about carrots and more about his Creator. "You may call all this rubbish if you please, but a time will come when you will be convinced whose notions are rubbish, yours or mine." And the old lady was quite right, as mothers so frequently turn out to be. In 1778 Young went over to Ireland as agent to Lord Kingsborough. He got £500 down, and was to have an annual salary of £500 and a house. Young soon got to work, and became anxious to persuade his employer to let his lands direct to the occupying cottar, and so get rid of the middlemen. This did not suit a certain Major Thornhill, a relative and leaseholder, and thereupon a pretty plot was hatched. Lady K. had a Catholic governess, a Miss Crosby, upon whom it was thought my lord occasionally cast the eye of partiality, whilst Arthur himself got on very well with her ladyship, who was heard to pronounce him to be, as he was, "one of the most lively, agreeable fellows." Out of these materials the Major and his helpmeet concocted a double plot

—namely, to make the lord jealous of the steward, and the lady jealous of the governess, and to cause both lord and lady respectively to believe that the steward was deeply engaged both in abetting the amour of the lord and the governess, and in prosecuting his own amour with the lady. The result was that both governess and steward got notice to quit; but—and this is very Irish—both went off with life annuities, the governess with one of £50 per annum, and the steward with one of £72, and, what is still more odd, we find Young at the end of his life in receipt of his annuity. They were an expensive couple, these two.

In 1780 Young published his *Irish Tour*, which was immediately successful and popular in both kingdoms. In it he attacked the bounty paid on the land-carriage of corn to Dublin. The bounty was, in the session of Parliament next after the publication of Young's book, reduced by one-half and soon given up entirely. Young maintains that this saved Ireland £80,000 a year. Nobody seems to have said "Thank you."

In May, 1783, was born the child "Bobbin," whose death, fourteen years later, was to change the current of Young's life. The following year Arthur Young paid his first visit to France, confining himself, however, to Calais and its neighbourhood, and in the same year his mother died, and, by an arrangement with his eldest brother, "this patch of landed property," as Young calls Bradfield, descended upon him. His first famous journey in France was made between May and November, 1787, and cost the marvellously small sum of £118 15s. 2d. His second and third French

journeys were made in July, 1788, and in June, 1789. The third was the longest, and extended into 1790. Three years later Young was appointed, by Pitt, Secretary of the then Board of Agriculture. A melancholy account is given by Young of a visit he paid Burke at Gregory's in 1796. Young drove there in the chariot of his fussy chief, Sir John Sinclair, to discover what Burke's intentions might be as to an intended publication of his relating to the price of labour. The account, which occupies four pages, is too long for quotation. It concludes thus:

> I am glad once more to have seen and conversed with the man whom I hold to possess the greatest and most brilliant gifts of any penman of the age in which he lived. Whose conversation has often fascinated me, whose eloquence has charmed; whose writings have delighted and instructed the world; whose name will without question descend to the latest posterity. But to behold so great a genius, so deepened with melancholy, stooping with infirmity of body, feeling the anguish of a lacerated mind, and sinking to the grave under accumulated misery—to see all this in a character I venerate, and apparently without resource or comfort, wounded every feeling of my soul, and I left him the next day almost as low-spirited as himself.

But Young himself was soon to pass into the same Valley of the Shadow, not so much of Death as of Joyless Life. His beloved and idolised Bobbin died on July 14th, 1797.[1] She seems to have been a wise little maiden, to whom her father wrote most affectionate letters, full of rather unsuitable details, political and financial and otherwise, and not scrupling to speak of the child's mother

[1] Little Bobbin (Martha) lies buried in her father's pew in Bradfield Combust (Suffolk) Church, which also contains in the vestry a tablet inscribed to her memory with an epitaph of her father's composition that still tears the heart.

in a disagreeable manner. Bobbin replies with delightful composure to these worrying letters:

> I have just got six of the most beautiful little rabbits you ever saw; they skip about so prettily you can't think, and I shall have some more in a few weeks. Having had so much physic, I am right down tired of it. I take it still twice a day —my appetite is better. What can you mind politics so for? I don't think about them.—Well, good-bye, and believe me, dear papa, your dutiful Daughter.

After poor little Bobbin's death, it happened to Arthur Young even as his mother foretold. Carrots and crops and farming tours hastily retreat, and we find the eminent agriculturist busying himself, with the same seriousness and good faith he had devoted to the rotation of the crops, with the sermons and treatises of Clarke and Jortin and Secker and Tillotson, etc., and all to discover what had become of his dear little Bobbin. His outlook upon the world was changed—the great parties at Petworth, at Euston, at Woburn struck him differently; the huge irreligion of the world filled him as for the first time with amazement and horror:

> How few years are passed since I should have pushed on eagerly to Woburn! This time twelve months I dined with the Duke on Sunday—the party not very numerous, but chiefly of rank—the entertainment more splendid than usual there. He expects me to-day, but I have more pleasure in resting, going twice to church, and eating a morsel of cold lamb at a very humble inn, than partaking of gaiety and dissipation at a great table which might as well be spread for a company of heathens as English lords and men of fashion.

It is all mighty fine calling this religious hypochondria and depression of spirits. It is one of the facts of life. Young stuck to his post, and did his work, and quarrelled with his wife to the end, or nearly so. He cannot have been so lively and agree-

able a companion as of old, for we find him in November, 1806, at Euston, endeavouring to impress on the Duke of Grafton that by his tenets he had placed himself entirely under the covenant of works, and that he must be tried for them, and that "I would not be in such a situation for ten thousand worlds. He was mild and more patient than I expected." Perhaps, after all, Carlyle was not so far wrong when he praised our aristocracy for their "politeness." In 1808 Young became blind. In 1815 his wife died. In 1820 he died himself, leaving behind him seven packets of manuscript and twelve folio volumes of correspondence.

Young's great work, *Travels during the Years* 1787, 1788, *and* 1789, *undertaken more particularly with a View of Ascertaining the Cultivation, Wealth, Resources, and National Prosperity of the Kingdom of France*, published in 1792, is one of those books which will always be a great favourite with somebody. It will outlive eloquence and outstay philosophy. It contains some famous passages.

THOMAS PAINE

1905

PROVERBS are said to be but half-truths, but "give a dog a bad name and hang him" is a saying almost as veracious as it is felicitous; and to no one can it possibly be applied with greater force than to Thomas Paine, the rebellious staymaker, the bankrupt tobacconist, the amazing author of *Common-sense*, *The Rights of Man*, and *The Age of Reason*.

Until quite recently "Tom Paine" lay without the pale of toleration. No circle of liberality was constructed wide enough to include him. Even the scouted Unitarian scouted Thomas. He was "the infamous Paine," "the vulgar atheist." Whenever mentioned in pious discourse it was but to be waved on one side as thus: "No one of my hearers is likely to be led astray by the scurrilous blasphemies of Paine."

I can well remember when an asserted intimacy with the writings of Paine marked a man from his fellows and invested him in children's minds with a horrid fascination. The writings themselves were only to be seen in bookshops of evil reputation, and, when hastily turned over with furtive glances, proved to be printed in small type and on villainous paper. For a boy to have bought them and taken them inside a decent home would have

been to run the risk of fierce wrath in this life and the threat of it in the next. If ever there was a hung dog, his name was "Tom Paine."

But History is, as we know, for ever revising her records. None of her judgments are final. A Life of Thomas Paine, in two portly and well-printed volumes, with gilt tops, wide margins, spare leaves at the end, and all the other signs and tokens of literary respectability, has lately appeared. No President, no Prime Minister—nay, no Bishop or Moderator—need hope to have his memoirs printed in better style than are these of Thomas Paine, by Mr. Moncure D. Conway. Were any additional proof required of the complete resuscitation of Paine's reputation, it might be found in the fact that his Life *is* in two volumes, though it would have been far better told in one.

Mr. Conway believes implicitly in Paine—not merely in his virtue and intelligence, but that he was a truly great man, who played a great part in human affairs. He will no more admit that Paine was a busybody, inflated with conceit and with a strong dash of insolence, than he will that Thomas was a drunkard. That Paine's speech was undoubtedly plain and his nose undeniably red is as far as Mr. Conway will go. If we are to follow the biographer the whole way, we must not only unhang the dog, but give him sepulture amongst the sceptred Sovereigns who rule us from their urns.

Thomas Paine was born at Thetford, in Norfolk, in January, 1737, and sailed for America in 1774, then being thirty-seven years of age. Up to this date he was a rank failure. His trade was stay-making, but he had tried his hand at many things.

He was twice an Excise officer, but was twice dismissed the service, the first time for falsely pretending to have made certain inspections which, in fact, he had not made, and the second time for carrying on business in an excisable article—tobacco, to wit—without the leave of the Board. Paine had married the tobacconist's business, but neither the marriage nor the business prospered; the second was sold by auction, and the first terminated by mutual consent.

Mr. Conway labours over these early days of his hero very much, but he can make nothing of them. Paine was an Excise officer at Lewes, where, so Mr. Conway reminds us, "seven centuries before Paine opened his office in Lewes, came Harold's son, possibly to take charge of the Excise as established by Edward the Confessor, just deceased." This device of biographers is a little stale. The Confessor was guiltless of the Excise.[1]

Paine's going to America was due to Benjamin Franklin, who made Paine's acquaintance in London, and, having the wit to see his ability, recommended him "as a clerk or assistant-tutor in a school or assistant-surveyor." Thus armed, Paine made his appearance in Philadelphia, where he at once obtained employment as editor of an intended periodical called the *Pennsylvanian Magazine or American Museum*, the first number of which appeared in January, 1775. Never was anything luckier. Paine was, without knowing it, a born journalist. His capacity for writing on the spur of the moment was endless, and his delight in doing

[1] Pym has been termed the Father of the Excise. See Dowell's *History of Taxation*, vol. ii. p. 9.

so boundless. He had no difficulty for "copy," though in those days contributors were few. He needed no contributors. He was "Atlanticus"; he was "Vox Populi"; he was "Æsop." The unsigned articles were also mostly his. Having at last, after many adventures and false starts, found his vocation, Paine stuck to it. He spent the rest of his days with a pen in his hand, scribbling his advice and obtruding his counsel on men and nations. Both were usually of excellent quality.

Paine was also happy in the moment of his arrival in America. The War of Independence was imminent, and in April, 1775, occurred "the massacre of Lexington." The Colonists were angry, but puzzled. They hardly knew what they wanted. They lacked a definite opinion to entertain and a cry to asseverate. Paine had no doubts. He hated British institutions with all the hatred of a civil servant who has had "the sack."

In January, 1776, he published his pamphlet *Common-sense*, which must be ranked with the most famous pamphlets ever written. It is difficult to wade through now, but even *The Conduct of the Allies* is not easy reading, and yet between Paine and Swift there is a great gulf fixed. The keynote of *Common-sense* was separation once and for ever, and the establishment of a great Republic of the West. It hit between wind and water, had a great sale, and made its author a personage and, in his own opinion, a divinity.

Paine now became the penman of the rebels. His series of manifestoes, entitled *The Crisis*, were widely read and carried healing on their wings, and in 1777 he was elected Secretary to the

Committee of Foreign Affairs. Charles Lamb once declared that Rousseau was a good enough Jesus Christ for the French, and he was capable of declaring Tom Paine a good enough Milton for the Yankees. However that may be, Paine was an indefatigable and useful public servant. He was a bad gauger for King George, but he was an admirable scribe for a revolution conducted on constitutional principles.

To follow his history through the war would be tedious. What Washington and Jefferson really thought of him we shall never know. He was never mercenary, but his pride was wounded that so little recognition of his astounding services was forthcoming. The ingratitude of kings was a commonplace; the ingratitude of peoples an unpleasing novelty. But Washington bestirred himself at last, and Paine was voted an estate of 277 acres, more or less, and a sum of money. This was in 1784.

Three years afterwards Thomas visited England, where he kept good company and was very usefully employed engineering, for which excellent pursuit he would appear to have had great natural aptitude. Blackfriars Bridge had just tumbled down, and it was Paine's laudable ambition to build its successor in iron. But the Bastille fell down as well as Blackfriars Bridge, and was too much for Paine. As Mr. Conway beautifully puts it: "But again the Cause arose before him; he must part from all—patent interests, literary leisure, fine society—and take the hand of Liberty undowered, but as yet unstained. He must beat his bridge-iron into a key that shall unlock the British Bastille, whose walls he sees steadily closing

around the people." "Miching mallecho — this means mischief;" and so it proved.

Burke is responsible for *The Rights of Man*. This splendid sentimentalist published his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in November, 1790. Paine immediately sat down in the "Angel," Islington, and began his reply. He was not unqualified to answer Burke; he had fought a good fight between the years 1775 and 1784. Mr. Conway had some ground for his epigram, "Where Burke had dabbled, Paine had dived." There is nothing in *The Rights of Man* which would now frighten, though some of its expressions might still shock, a lady-in-waiting; but to profess Republicanism in 1791 was no joke, and the book was proclaimed and Paine prosecuted. Acting upon the advice of William Blake (the truly sublime), Paine escaped to France, where he was elected by three departments to a seat in the Convention, and in that Convention he sat from September, 1792, to December, 1793, when he was found quarters in the Luxembourg Prison.

This invitation to foreigners to take part in the conduct of the French Revolution was surely one of the oddest things that ever happened, but Paine thought it natural enough so far, at least, as he was concerned. He could not speak a word of French, and all his harangues had to be translated and read to the Convention by a secretary, whilst Thomas stood smirking in the Tribune. His behaviour throughout was most creditable to him. He acted with the Girondists, and strongly opposed and voted against the murder of the King. His notion of a revolution was one by pamphlet,

and he shrank from deeds of blood. His whole position was false and ridiculous. He really counted for nothing. The members of the Convention grew tired of his doctrinaire harangues, which, in fact, bored them not a little; but they respected his enthusiasm and the part he had played in America, whither they would gladly he had returned. Who put him in prison is a mystery. Mr. Conway thinks it was the American Minister in Paris, Gouverneur Morris. He escaped the guillotine, and was set free after ten months' confinement.

All this time Washington had not moved a finger in behalf of the author of *Common-sense* and *The Crisis*. Amongst Paine's papers this epigram was found:

ADVICE TO THE STATUARY WHO IS TO EXECUTE THE STATUE OF WASHINGTON

Take from the mine the coldest, hardest stone;
It needs no fashion—it is Washington.
But if you chisel, let the stroke be rude,
And on his heart engrave—" Ingratitude."

This is hard hitting.

So far we have only had the Republican Paine, the outlaw Paine; the atheist Paine has not appeared. He did so in *The Age of Reason*, first published in 1794–1795. The object of this book was religious. Paine was a vehement believer in God and in the Divine government of the world, but he was not, to put it mildly, a Bible Christian. Nobody now is ever likely to read *The Age of Reason* for instruction or amusement. Who now reads even Mr. Greg's *Creed of Christendom*, which is, in effect, though not in substance, the same kind of book? Paine was a coarse writer, without

refinement of nature, and he used brutal expressions and hurled his vulgar words about in a manner certain to displease. Still, despite it all, *The Age of Reason* is a religious book, though a singularly unattractive one.

Paine remained in France advocating all kinds of things, including a descent on England, the abduction of the Royal Family, and a Free Constitution. Napoleon sought him out, and assured him that he (Napoleon) slept with *The Rights of Man* under his pillow. Paine believed him.

In 1802 Paine returned to America, after fifteen years' absence.

"Thou stricken friend of man," exclaims Mr. Conway in a fine passage, "who hast appealed from the God of Wrath to the God of Humanity, see in the distance that Maryland coast which early voyagers called Avalon, and sing again your song when first stepping on that shore twenty-seven years ago."

The rest of Paine's life was spent in America without distinction or much happiness. He continued writing to the last, and died bravely on the morning of June 8th, 1809.

The Americans did not appreciate Paine's theology, and in 1819 allowed Cobbett to carry the bones of the author of *Common-sense* to England, where—"as rare things will," so, at least, Mr. Browning sings — they vanished. Nobody knows what has become of them.

As a writer Paine has no merits of a lasting character, but he had a marvellous journalistic knack for inventing names and headings. He is believed to have concocted the two phrases "The

United States of America" and "The Religion of Humanity." Considering how little he had read, his discourses on the theory of government are wonderful, and his views generally were almost invariably liberal, sensible, and humane. What ruined him was an intolerable self-conceit, which led him to believe that his own productions superseded those of other men. He knew off by heart, and was fond of repeating, his own *Common-sense* and *The Rights of Man*. He was destitute of the spirit of research, and was wholly without one shred of humility. He was an oddity, a character, but he never took the first step towards becoming a great man.

JOHN WESLEY

SOME ASPECTS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY IN ENGLAND

1902

IT was a fortunate thing for historians, moralists, philosophers, and every other kind of book-maker when it became the habit to chop up the annals of mankind into centuries. It is a meaningless division save for the purpose of counting, and yet such is our passion for generalisation, so fond are we of distinguishing and differentiating, that we all of us have long ago endowed each one of the nineteen Christian centuries (to wander back no farther) with its own characteristics and attributes. These arbitrary divisions of time have thus become sober realities; they stalk majestically across the stage of memory, they tread the boards each in its own garb, making appropriate gestures and uttering familiar catch-words. Lord Clarendon's History is not more unlike Gibbon's, Bishop Ken is not more unlike Bishop Hoadly, Prince Rupert is not more unlike John Churchill, than is the seventeenth century as we choose to depict it unlike the eighteenth. And yet full well do we know in the bottom of our hearts, those unpleasing depths where we seldom dredge for fear of the consequences, how impossible it is to compress into the lines of a single figure, however animated its countenance or mobile its features, the vast

tide of human existence as it flows gigantically along regardless of methods of counting time.

The eighteenth century in England does not lack its historians and painters who have treated their great subject sometimes after a Pre-Raphaelite fashion, and sometimes after the manner of the impressionists. It has been loaded with abuse by picturesque historians and high-flying divines and romantic poets. Its political franchise was certainly restricted, while its civil list was unduly extended. It whitewashed its churches, and even sought to rationalise its religion. No less emancipated an intelligence than Mark Pattison's pronounced the first half of the eighteenth century to be "an age destitute of faith and earnestness—an age whose poetry was without romance, whose philosophy was without insight, and whose public men were without character." Harsh words indeed, but not lightly written.

Yet when abandoning generalities and dwelling on the details of the time as it was then spent in England, it is difficult to reconcile all one's reading with any very sweeping assertions. It was a brutal age, no doubt—an age of the press-gang, of the whipping-post, of gaol-fever, and all the horrors of the criminal code; an ignorant age, when the population, lords and louts alike, drank with great freedom and reckoned cock-fighting among the more innocent joys of life; when education of the kind called popular, or, more correctly, primary —for popular it is not and never will be—was hardly thought of; a corrupt age, when offices and votes were bought and sold, and bishops owed their sees to the King's women.

Brutal, ignorant, and corrupt. That the eighteenth century in England was all this, is it not written in the storied page of Hogarth? Charles Lamb quotes with critical approval the answer of the man who, when asked to name his favourite author, replied: "Next to Shakespeare, Hogarth." We all love a crowded gallery—people coming, going, incidents, emotions, passions evil as well as good, for there is nothing we cannot forgive humanity—and Hogarth's gallery teems with the life of the eighteenth century; catches, as only great painters can, its most evanescent glances, and records its desperate efforts to amuse itself or forget itself between two eternities. And though so true a humorist could not be oblivious of the kindly side of life or be without some gracious touches and affectionate portrayals, still, roughly speaking, the great historian of the eighteenth century in England affirms the brutal view of it, its cruelty, its horror. How people can frame Hogarth's prints and hang them up in their rooms is more than I can say.

But there are other authorities, other aspects, other books. Two of the catchwords of the eighteenth century are *sentimentality* and *enthusiasm*. The first of the two is supposed to have been invented by the famous author of the *History of Clarissa Harlowe, a Series of Letters*. He it was, that little printer and warden of a city company, who first opened the rusty floodgates of English tears and taught the South Briton how to weep as he had never wept before. But it is with *enthusiasm* I would deal to-day. During the eighteenth

century enthusiasm is a word of almost as frequent occurrence as either wit or parts. It has been pointed out by an ingenious friend of my own that Pope, in his *Essay on Criticism*, employs the word "wit" forty-seven times and in at least seven different senses;[1] and as for "parts," though the word may be found in Sidney and Spenser, the eighteenth century made it peculiarly its own. But "enthusiasm" is also a very frequent word. Lord Shaftesbury, the third Earl and the author of the *Characteristicks* before the century was in its teens, wrote his famous *Letter Concerning Enthusiasm*, in which he is supposed to have said: "Ridicule is the test of truth." He never said so anywhere in so many words, but he gets very near it in this letter in which he describes enthusiasm as one of the dangers of the age, a terrible distemper, almost as bad as the small-pox. In the opinion of my lord enthusiasm is a modification of the spleen, having its centre in an ill-regulated religion. True religion, in the opinion of that third Lord Shaftesbury, is based on good humour. He observes in his fashionable way: "'Tis in adversity chiefly or in ill-health, under affliction or disturbance of mind or discomposure of temper, that we have recourse to religion, though in reality we are never so unfit to think of it as at such a dark and heavy hour. We can never be fit to contemplate anything above us when we are in no condition to look into ourselves and calmly examine the temper of our own minds and passions, for then it is we see wrath and fury and

[1] Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, edited by A. S. West. Cambridge University Press, 1896.

revenge and terror in the Deity when we are full of disturbances and fears within, and have by suffering and anxiety lost so much of the natural calm and easiness of our temper."

Thus did the infant century at the very outset of its journey meet, in the shape of this elegant peer, its Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, who, you will remember, in reply to Christian's distracted "I know what I would obtain; it is ease for my heavy burden," observes in the same sense as Shaftesbury, though in homelier language: "But why wilt thou seek for ease in this way, seeing so many dangers attend it, especially since (hadst thou but patience to hear me) I could direct thee to the obtaining of what thou desirest, without the dangers that thou in this way wilt run thyself into—yea, and the remedy is at hand? Besides I will add that instead of those dangers, thou shalt meet with much safety, friendship, and content."

Why wilt thou seek for ease in this way when if you will only be good-humoured, sensible, and let the world wag, you will meet with much safety, friendship, and content?

All through the eighteenth century, from Lord Shaftesbury at the beginning to Bishop Lavington nearer its close, enthusiasm continued the *bête noire* of all those decent people who think that as God made the world He should be left alone to mend it. The inherent absurdity of enthusiasm seldom failed to illuminate the good-natured countenance of David Hume with a smile half a philosopher's and half a man of the world's, while it provoked a not ill-natured sneer from Gibbon, who, though he wrote the history of the fall of the

Roman Empire was taken quite by surprise, and, indeed, terribly put out, by the fall of the French monarchy in his own day. He, while referring to the author of *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, one of the most characteristic books of the eighteenth century, observes in that way of his so suggestive of a snug corner and a library chair: "Had not Law's vigorous mind been clouded by enthusiasm, he might be ranked with the most agreeable and ingenious writers of his time." Devoutness, holiness, the inward life, the flight from wrath to come, the horror of sin, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, raptures, transports, fancies, visions, voices—all these things and more are included in that word "enthusiasm," which is for ever cropping up in this eighteenth century, the reason being that the century was full of it, and during its years countless thousands of pilgrims not only played the fool in Vanity Fair and made beasts of themselves in Gin Lane, but with groans and trembling passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and caught glimpses of the towers and palaces of the city of God.

We have too few books which bring home to us in concrete form the lives and thoughts of our forefathers. Historians we know, good, bad, and indifferent, the learned but dull, the dull but conscientious, the picturesque but false; the historian who writes his history because he has a grudge against the Church of England, whose Orders he has renounced; his Anglican rival, who writes his because he resents as a personal affront the attitude of the Church of Rome to the English branch; the Nonconformist historian, who has his quarrel both

with the Vatican and Lambeth, and is better read in his Calamy's *Nonconformist Memorial* than in his Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy*. They all have their value, these historians, and their vogue. Gladly do I give them place. But they none of them supply us with what we want. Suppose, for example, I want to be infected with the learning and the leisure of the eighteenth century: the generalisations of the regular historian are of no use to me. Their pages contain no microbes, distil no perfumes. If Mr. Austin Dobson's poems are by my side or his prose studies, they will for a brief season lay me low; but a resurrectionary *tour de force* has never the reposeful air of Nature. For such a purpose as I have just indicated there is nothing quite so good as the seventeen volumes of Nichols's *Anecdotes and Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*. In a sense, and a very real sense, too, these portly tomes may be called utterly insignificant. They rarely recall a name of first-class importance or record a fact in itself worth mentioning. They force you to spend your time in the company of historians, not of empires, but of counties, of typographers, antiquaries, classical scholars, lettered divines, librarians at great houses, learned tradesmen (for such freaks existed in the eighteenth century); they tell you of lives wasted in colleges and country rectories; they remind you of forgotten controversies and foolish personal enmities; they are full of Latin epitaphs. And every now and again in your country wanderings the originals of these epitaphs will stare at you from some snug transept corner, or meet your eye as you wander westward down the nave of an

abbey church or other old-world burying-place. You will not be troubled with enthusiasm in Mr. Nichols's collections, but to read them is to live in the eighteenth century. In sundry moods they will serve your turn well enough, but the reaction must come, when you will grow impatient of all this trifling, and demand to be quit of tiresome coteries and tenth-rate literature, and to be admitted into the life of the nation. Then, if you are wise, you will carefully replace Mr. Nichols on the shelf (for it is childish to knock books about, and the mood will recur), and take down *The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M., sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford.*

John Wesley, born as he was in 1703, and dying as he did in 1791, covers as nearly as mortal man may the whole of the eighteenth century, of which he was one of the most typical figures, and certainly the most strenuous. He began his published Journal on October 14th, 1735, and its last entry is under date Sunday, October 24th, 1790, when in the morning he explained to a numerous congregation in Spitalfields Church "The Whole Armour of God," and in the afternoon enforced to a still larger audience in St. Paul's, Shadwell, the great truth, "One thing is needful," the last words of the Journal being: "I hope many even then resolved to choose the better part."

Between those two Octobers there lies the most amazing record of human exertion ever penned or endured. I do not know whether I am likely to have among my readers anyone who has ever contested an English or Scotch county in a Parlia-

mentary Election since household suffrage. If I have, that tired soul will know how severe is the strain of its three weeks, and how impossible it seemed at the end of the first week that you should be able to keep it going for another fortnight, and how when the last night arrived you felt that had the strife been accidentally prolonged another seven days you must have perished by the wayside. Well, John Wesley contested the three kingdoms in the cause of Christ during a campaign which lasted forty years. He did it for the most part on horseback. He paid more turnpikes than any man who ever bestrode a beast. Eight thousand miles was his annual record for many a long year, during each of which he seldom preached less frequently than a thousand times. Had he but preserved his scores at all the inns where he lodged, they would have made by themselves a history of prices. And throughout it all he never knew what depression of spirits meant, though he had much to try him—suits in Chancery and a jealous wife.

In the course of this unparalleled contest Wesley visited again and again the most out-of-the-way districts, the remotest corners of England—places which to-day lie far removed even from the searcher after the picturesque. Even in 1899, when the map of England looks like a gridiron of railways, none but the sturdiest of pedestrians, the most determined of cyclists, can retrace the steps of Wesley and his horse and stand by the rocks and the natural amphitheatres in Cornwall and Northumberland, in Lancashire and Berkshire, where he preached his Gospel to the heathen. Exertion so prolonged, enthusiasm so sustained, argues a

remarkable man, while the organisation he created, the system he founded, the view of life he promulgated, is still a great fact among us. No other name than Wesley's lies embalmed as his does. Yet he is not a popular figure. Our standard historians—save, indeed, Mr. Lecky—have dismissed him curtly. The fact is, Wesley puts your ordinary historian out of conceit with himself. How much easier to weave into your page the gossip of Horace Walpole, to enliven it with a heartless jest of George Selwyn's, to make it blush with sad stories of the extravagance of Fox, to embroider it with the rhetoric of Burke, to humanise it with the talk of Johnson, to discuss the rise and fall of administrations, the growth and decay of the constitution, than to follow John Wesley into the streets of Bristol or on to the bleak moors near Burslem, where he met face to face in all their violence, all their ignorance, and all their generosity the living men, women, and children who made up the nation!

It has perhaps also to be admitted that to found great organisations is to build your tomb. A splendid tomb it may be, a veritable sarcophagus, but none the less a tomb. John Wesley's chapels lie a little heavily on John Wesley. Even so do the glories of Rome make us forgetful of the grave in Syria.

It has been said that Wesley's character lacks charm, that mighty antiseptic. It is not easy to define charm, which is not a catalogue of qualities, but a mixture. Let no one deny charm to Wesley who has not read his Journal. Southey's *Life* is a dull, almost a stupid, book, which happily there is

no need to read. Read the Journal, which is a book full of plots and plays and novels, which quivers with life, and is crammed full of character.

John Wesley came of a stock which had been much harassed and put about by our unhappy religious difficulties. Politics, business, and religion are the three things Englishmen are said to worry themselves about. The Wesleys early took up with religion. John Wesley's great-grandfather and grandfather were both ejected from their livings in 1662, and the grandfather was so bullied and oppressed by the Five Mile Act that he early gave up the ghost, whereupon his remains were refused what is called Christian burial, though a holier and more primitive man never drew breath. This poor persecuted spirit left two sons according to the flesh, Matthew and Samuel; and Samuel it was who in his turn became the father of John and Charles Wesley.

Samuel Wesley, though minded to share the lot, hard though that lot was, of his progenitors, had the moderation of mind, the Christian conservatism, perhaps even the disposition to Toryism, which marked the family, and being sent to a Dissenting college, became disgusted with the ferocity and bigotry he happened there to encounter. Those were the days of the Calf's Head Club and feastings on the 29th of January, graceless meals for which Samuel Wesley had no stomach. His turn was for the things that are "quiet, wise and good." He departed from the Dissenting seminary, and in 1685 entered himself as a poor scholar at Exeter College, Oxford. He brought £2 6s. with him, and as for prospects, he had none. Exeter received

him. During the eighteenth century our two Universities, famous despite their faults, were always open to the poor scholar who was ready to subscribe, not to boat clubs or cricket clubs, but to the Thirty-nine Articles. Three Archbishops of Canterbury during the eighteenth century were the sons of small tradesmen. There was, in fact, much less snobbery and money-worship during the century when the British Empire was being won than during the century when it is being talked about. Samuel Wesley was allowed to remain at Oxford, where he supported himself by devices known to his tribe, and when he left the University to be ordained he had clear in his pouch, after discharging his few debts, £10 15s. He had thus made £7 19s. out of his University, and had his education, as it were, thrown in for nothing. He soon obtained a curacy in London, and married a daughter of the well-known ejected clergyman, Dr. Annesley, about whom you may read in another eighteenth-century book, *The Life and Errors of John Dunton.*

The mother of the Wesleys was a remarkable woman, though cast in a mould not much to our minds nowadays. She had nineteen children, and greatly prided herself on having taught them, one after another, by frequent chastisements, to—what do you think?—cry softly. She had theories of education, and strength of will and of arm, too, to carry them out. She knew Latin and Greek, and though a stern, forbidding, almost an unfeeling parent, she was successful in winning and retaining, not only the respect, but the affection of such of her huge family as lived to grow up. But out of

the nineteen thirteen early succumbed. Infant mortality was one of the great facts of the eighteenth century, whose Rachels had to learn to cry softly over their dead babes. The mother of the Wesleys thought more of her children's souls than of their bodies.

The revolution of 1688 threatened to disturb the early married life of Samuel Wesley and his spouse. The husband wrote a pamphlet in which he defended revolution principles, but the wife secretly adhered to the old cause; nor was it until a year before Dutch William's death that the Rector made the discovery that the wife of his bosom, who had sworn to obey him and regard him as her overlord, was not in the habit of saying "Amen" to his fervent prayers on behalf of his suffering Sovereign. An explanation was demanded and the truth extracted, namely, that in the opinion of the Rector's wife her true King lived over the water. The Rector at once refused to live with Mrs. Wesley any longer until she recanted. This she refused to do, and for a twelvemonth the couple dwelt apart, when William III. having the good sense to die, a reconciliation became possible. If John Wesley was occasionally a little pig-headed, need one wonder? The story of the fire at Epworth Rectory and the miraculous escape of the infant John was once a tale as well known as Alfred in the neat-herd's hut, and pictures of it still hang up in many a collier's home.

John Wesley received a sound classical education at Charterhouse and Christ Church, and remained all his life very much the scholar and the gentleman. No company was too good for John Wesley,

and nobody knew better than he did that had he cared to carry his powerful intelligence, his flawless constitution, and his infinite capacity for taking pains into any of the markets of the world, he must have earned for himself place, fame, and fortune.

Coming, however, as he did of a theological stock, having a saint for a father and a notable devout woman for a mother, Wesley from his early days learned to regard religion as the business of his life, just as the younger Pitt came to regard the House of Commons as the future theatre of his actions. After a good deal of heart-searching and theological talk with his mother, Wesley was ordained a deacon by the excellent Potter, afterward Primate, but then (1725) Bishop of Oxford. In the following year Wesley was elected a Fellow of Lincoln, to the great delight of his father. "Whatever I am," said the good old man, "my Jack is Fellow of Lincoln."

In trying to form even a glimmering idea of the state of the Church of England in 1725, when Wesley took Orders, there are some incidents in its past history which must not be overlooked. I mean its repeated purgings. Evictions are of course, of frequent occurrence in all Church histories, but the Church of England has been peculiarly unlucky in this respect. Let me, in a handful of sentences, recall the facts. I pass over the puzzling and unedifying events of King Henry VIII.'s time, the Protestant rule of his short-lived son, the frank Romanism of his eldest daughter, and begin with Elizabeth, who succeeded in November, 1558. Crowned though she was according to

the Catholic ceremonial, including the unction and the Pontifical Mass, it appears to have been well understood by those in high place that England, having got a new master, must be prepared once more for new men and new measures. They were indeed strange times. Can it be that the country did not care about the continuity of its Church? The Act of Supremacy soon made its appearance, annexing to the Crown all jurisdictions, spiritual and ecclesiastical, for the visitation and reformation of the ecclesiastical state and persons, and of all errors, heresies, and schisms. The inevitable oath was directed to be taken under the usual penalties—first, loss of property, then loss of life. When Queen Mary died there were but fifteen Anglican Bishops alive. Of these, fourteen refused the oath, and were turned neck-and-crop out of their sees. They went away quickly enough, and disappeared into obscurity. Elizabeth called them a lazy set of scamps. We have no evidence that they were anything of the kind. Hardships and indignities were heaped upon them. Some died in prison, others in retirement; one or two escaped abroad. It seems to be the fact that they all died in their beds. They had no mind either to burn or hang. Jeremy Collier gives us, in addition to those fourteen prelates, a list of three bishops-elect, one abbot, one abbess, four priors, twelve deans, fourteen archdeacons, sixty canons, one hundred priests, all well preferred, fifteen heads of colleges, and about twenty doctors of both faculties—all what one may call stationary people hard to move, who were at this same time deprived of their places, profits, and dignities. It does not seem a great

many out of the nine thousand spiritual places in England. Still, to lose its whole hierarchy (except the Bishop of Llandaff) at one blow was a shrewd knock, nor, we may be sure, did the bishops-elect, the deans, the archdeacons and canons, the heads of houses and doctors of divinity, and the one hundred well-preferred priests go out without rendings of the heart and bitter reflections. There were no newspapers to record their emotions or to summarise their losses under the heading "Crisis in the Church"; but we may be sure they were pious men, sick of shuffles and crowned heads, while of those who remained, who can tell with what uneasiness of mind, with what pangs of conscience, they did so?

This is Purge No. 1, and it got rid of the old Roman pietist; and let no man deny to the Church of Rome one of the notes of a true Church —the capacity to breed saints.

Purge No. 2 was numerically more important. Charles I. got into those difficulties which brought his comely head to the scaffold, and the beneficed clergy were made subject to visitation by order of the House of Commons and in large numbers turned adrift. That many of these clergy were illiterate and unfit for their office is true enough, but in the teeth of the protests made by the best men among the Puritan party, other tests than those of learning and piety were imposed and enforced. Loyalty to the dead king, or malignancy as it was termed, was counted to be a disqualification for a country parson; a sour observance of Sunday was reckoned as piety, and many a good man who had earned and deserved the love of his

parishioners was evicted to make way for a Presbyterian. How many parsons were turned out during the Commonwealth it is hard to say, but many hundreds there certainly were, and among them were numbered some of the very choicest spirits of the age.

Purge No. 3 is the one best known in Nonconformist circles. It occurred after the restoration of the Stuarts, when two thousand of the clergy, including a large number of the intruders of the Commonwealth, were turned out of their livings for refusing to take the oath required by the Act of Uniformity. The celebrated Richard Baxter (who refused a bishopric) tells us in his Life, which is one of the best books in existence, how these evicted tenants were made up. The passage is too long to be here quoted, and it is enough to say that by this purge the Church of England lost a host of her clergy who had no objection to Bishops or to a Liturgy, who had never signed the Solemn League and Covenant, who had been against the Civil War, but who were unwilling, because unable, to give their unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer. But they had to go. They were devout, they were learned, they were peaceful, they were sensible. It mattered not; out they went like Wesley's own grandfather, and were hunted from place to place like wolves.

Purge No. 4 has still to be endured. The Stuarts ran their destined course. The blessed restoration was in less than thirty years succeeded by the glorious revolution, and a fresh oath had, of course, to be invented as a burden upon the

conscience of the established clergy. It was in form simple enough: "I, A. B., do sincerely promise and swear to bear true allegiance to their Majesties King William and Queen Mary." But to appreciate its horrid significance, we must remember that the now mouldy doctrines of "Divine right" and "passive obedience" were then as much the talk of the clergy of the Church of England as incense, lights, and the sacramental theory are to-day. The books and pamphlets on these subjects may still be counted, though hardly read, in thousands. The Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Sancroft) and five of his brethren, including Bishop Ken, were deprived of their sees, and at least four hundred divines followed them into exile. These were the non-jurors, men of fabulous learning and primitive piety, who added evangelical fervour and simplicity to High Church doctrine. To read the lives of these men is to live among the saints and doctors, and their expulsion from the Church they alone loved and they alone could properly defend diverted into alien channels the very qualities we find so sorely lacking in the Anglican Church of the eighteenth century. How absurd to grumble at the Hoadlys and Watsons, the Hurds and the Warburtons! They were all that was left. Faith and fervour, primitive piety, Puritan zeal, Catholic devotion—each in its turn had been decimated and cast out. What a history it is! Whether you read it in the Roman page of Lingard and Dodd and Morris, or in the Anglican record of Collier, or turn over the biographies to be found in our old friends Walker and Calamy, what can you do but hold up your hands in horror

and amazement? Wherever and whenever there was goodness, piety, faith, devotion, out it had to go. It was indeed as into a dungeon, stripped, swept, and bare, that the Church of England stepped at the revolution, and in that dungeon she lay for a hundred years. Since then many things have happened. There has been a revival of faith and fervour in the Church of England, so much so that Purge No. 5 may shortly be expected.

The reason why I have dwelt at great length on these facts of Church history is because we should have them in mind if we are to understand what may be called the *status quo ante bellum* John Wesley waged with the Devil in Great Britain.

Wesley's motive never eludes us. In his early manhood, after being greatly affected by Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying* and the *Imitatio Christi*, and by Law's *Serious Call* and *Christian Perfection*, he met "a serious man," who said to him: "Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven. Remember, you cannot serve Him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." He was very confident, this serious man, and Wesley never forgot his message: "You must find companions or make them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." These words for ever sounded in Wesley's ears, determining his theology, which rejected the stern individualism of Calvin, and fashioning his whole polity, his famous class meetings and generally gregarious methods.

Therefore to him it was given
Many to save with himself.

We may continue the quotation and apply to Wesley the words of Mr. Arnold's memorial to his father:

> Languor was not in his heart,
> Weakness not in his word,
> Weariness not on his brow.

If you ask what is the impression left upon the reader of the Journals as to the condition of England question, the answer will vary very much with the tenderness of the reader's conscience and with the extent of his acquaintance with the general behaviour of mankind at all times and in all places. Wesley himself is no alarmist, no sentimentalist; he never gushes, seldom exaggerates, and always writes on an easy level. Naturally enough he clings to the supernatural, and is always disposed to believe in the *bona fides* of ghosts and the diabolical origin of strange noises; but outside this realm of speculation Wesley describes things as he saw them. In the first published words of his friend Dr. Johnson, "he meets with no basilisks that destroy with their eyes, his crocodiles devour their prey without tears, and his cataracts fall from the rocks without deafening the neighbouring inhabitants."

Wesley's humour is of the species donnish, and his modes and methods quietly persistent.

> On Thursday, the 20th May (1742), I set out. The next afternoon I stopped a little at Newport-Pagnell, and then rode on till I overtook a serious man, with whom I immediately fell into conversation. He presently gave me to know what his opinions were, therefore I said nothing to contradict them. But that did not content him. He was quite uneasy to know "whether I held the doctrines of the decrees as he did"; but I told him over and over: "We had better keep to practical things, lest we should be angry at one another."

And so we did for two miles, till he caught me unawares, and dragged me into the dispute before I knew where I was. He then grew warmer and warmer; told me I was rotten at heart, and supposed I was one of John Wesley's followers. I told him "No. I am John Wesley himself." Upon which—

> "Improvisum aspris veluti qui sentibus anguem
> Presset"—

he would gladly have run away outright, but being the better mounted of the two I kept close to his side, and endeavoured to show him his heart till we came into the street of Northampton.

What a picture have we here of a fine May morning in 1742, the unhappy Calvinist trying to shake off the Arminian Wesley! But he cannot do it. *John Wesley is the better mounted of the two*, and so they scamper together into Northampton.

The England described in the Journal is an England still full of theology. All kinds of queer folk abound; strange subjects are discussed in odd places. There was drunkenness and cock-fighting, no doubt, but there were also Deists, Mystics, Swedenborgians, Antinomians, Necessitarians, Anabaptists, Quakers, nascent heresies, and slow-dying delusions. Villages were divided into rival groups, which fiercely argued the nicest points in the aptest language. Nowadays in one's rambles a man is as likely to encounter a grey badger as a black Calvinist.

The clergy of the Established Church were jealous of Wesley's interference in their parishes, nor was this unnatural; he was not a Nonconformist, but a brother Churchman. What right had he to be so peripatetic? But Wesley seldom records any instance of gross clerical misconduct. Of one drunken parson he does indeed tell us, and he speaks disapprovingly of another whom he

found one very hot day consuming a pot of beer in a lone alehouse. I am bound to confess I have never had any but kindly feelings toward that thirsty ecclesiastic. What, I wonder, was he thinking of as Wesley rode by? *Méditations Libres d'un Solitaire Inconnu*—unpublished!

When Wesley, with that dauntless courage of his—a courage which never forsook him, which he wore on every occasion with the delightful ease of a soldier—pushed his way into fierce districts, amid rough miners dwelling in their own village communities almost outside the law, what most strikes one with admiration, not less in Wesley's Journal than in George Fox's (a kindred though earlier volume), is the essential fitness for freedom of our rudest populations. They were coarse and brutal and savage, but rarely did they fail to recognise the high character and lofty motives of the dignified mortal who had travelled so far to speak to them. Wesley was occasionally hustled, and once or twice pelted with mud and stones, but at no time were his sufferings at the hands of the mob to be compared with the indignities it was long the fashion to heap upon the heads of Parliamentary candidates. The mob knew and appreciated the difference between a Bubb Dodington and a John Wesley.

I do not think any ordinary Englishman will be much horrified at the demeanour of the populace. If there was disturbance it was usually quelled. At Norwich two soldiers who disturbed a congregation were seized and carried before their commanding officer, who ordered them to be soundly whipped. In Wesley's opinion they richly deserved

all they got. He was no sentimentalist, although an enthusiast.

Where the reader of the Journal will be shocked is when his attention is called to the public side of the country—to the state of the gaols, to Newgate, to Bethlehem, to the criminal code, to the brutality of so many of the judges and the harshness of the magistrates, to the supineness of the bishops, to the extinction in high places of the missionary spirit—in short, to the heavy slumber of humanity.

Wesley was full of compassion—of a compassion wholly free from hysterics and credulity. In public affairs his was the composed zeal of a Howard. His efforts to penetrate the dark places were long in vain. He says in his dry way: "They won't let me go to Bedlam because they say I make the inmates mad, or into Newgate because I make them wicked." The reader of the Journal will be at no loss to see what these sapient magistrates meant. Wesley was a terribly exciting preacher, quiet though his manner was. He pushed matters home without flinching. He made people cry out and fall down, nor did it surprise him that they should. You will find some strange biographies in the Journal. Consider that of John Lancaster for a moment. He was a young fellow who fell into bad company, stole some velvet, and was sentenced to death, and lay for awhile in Newgate awaiting his hour. A good Methodist woman, Sarah Peters, obtained permission to visit him, though the fever was raging in the prison at the time. Lancaster had no difficulty in collecting six or seven other prisoners, all like himself waiting to be strangled, and Sarah Peters prayed with

them and sang hymns, the clergy of the diocese being otherwise occupied. When the eve of their execution arrived, the poor creatures begged that Sarah Peters might be allowed to remain with them to continue her exhortations; but this could not be. In her absence, however, they contrived to console one another, for that devilish device of a later age, solitary confinement, was then unknown. When the bellman came round at midnight to tell them, "Remember you are to die to-day," they cried out: "Welcome news—welcome news!" How they met their deaths you can read for yourselves in the Journal, which concludes the narrative with a true eighteenth-century touch: "John Lancaster's body was carried away by a company hired by the surgeons, but a crew of sailors pursued them, took it from them by force, and delivered it to his mother, by which means it was decently interred in the presence of many who praised God on his behalf."

If you want to get into the last century, to feel its pulses throb beneath your finger, be content sometimes to leave the letters of Horace Walpole unturned, resist the drowsy temptation to waste your time over the learned triflers who sleep in the seventeen volumes of Nichols—nay, even deny yourself your annual reading of Boswell or your biennial retreat with Sterne, and ride up and down the country with the greatest force of the eighteenth century in England.

No man lived nearer the centre than John Wesley, neither Clive nor Pitt, neither Mansfield nor Johnson. You cannot cut him out of our national life. No single figure influenced so many

minds, no single voice touched so many hearts. No other man did such a life's work for England. As a writer he has not achieved distinction. He was no Athanasius, no Augustine. He was ever a preacher and an organiser, a labourer in the service of humanity; but, happily for us, his Journals remain, and from them we can learn better than from anywhere else what manner of man he was, and the character of the times during which he lived and moved and had his being.

SIR ROBERT PEEL [1]

1902

ENGLISH politicians, though of the first rank, must usually be content, like the heroes of the mimic stage, with full houses and loud cheers; with the verdicts of their contemporaries; the enthusiasm of their supporters; the respect of their opponents; with the loves and hates and jealousies of an active life; the sense of full days and stirring events, of proud moments and realised ambitions. Opportunists they all were, of course, else had they not been British statesmen and pilots in the dark hours. We do not search their memoirs for pregnant sayings, and if we read their speeches at all, Burke's only excepted, it is for purely party purposes, certainly not for intellectual profit or æsthetic enjoyment. To survey the comely series of volumes which contain the orations of our great Parliamentary figures from Pitt to Gladstone, is to summon up the same thoughts and to create the same atmosphere of melancholy pleasure, as when in some green-room library you take down from a seldom-visited shelf copies of the old plays in which a Betterton or a Garrick, a Siddons or a Jordan, once took the town by storm. Charles Lamb has moralised on old playbills; old orders of the day might well provoke kindred reflections.

[1] From the *Contemporary Review*.

When a great politician dies, a man whose name has been on the tongues of all, and in every kind of type for scores of years, the good-hearted British public makes the matutinal observations, conventionally described as "mourning a loss"; attends his funeral or memorial service, and then, after scratching his name on the Abbey stones or elsewhere, is well content to leave him alone for evermore with the epithet or attribute it deems most appropriate to attach to his name. Thus, Pitt is majestic, Fox generous, Canning splendid, Palmerston patriotic, John Russell plucky, Disraeli romantic, Gladstone religious; and so on. Nor are these epithets open to revision. Whatever records leap to life they are not in the least likely to be altered. The fact is, Englishmen understand their political leaders from top to toe. They have never mistaken them for saints, heroes, or philosophers. Indeed, they know them to be sinners, usually as blind to the future as the grocer down the street, and occasionally as ignorant of the past as the publican at the corner, but who for all that stood like men for their brief hour on the quarter-deck of the big ship, which is still groaning and grunting on its way. At all events, they never ran her aground.

Sir Robert Peel was born in 1788, in the old world, as one may say. And now, one hundred and eleven years afterwards, in a quite new world, in a country which takes every year from the pockets of its people £110,000,000 sterling, we are for the first time supplied with the materials necessary for forming what is called an instructed opinion upon his most remarkable public career. Everything is

placed at our service, all is well arranged and clearly expressed, nothing seems kept back that relates to a public life; and yet for the purposes of reviewing contemporary judgments, or of revising the careless tradition of the street, or of enabling us to sit with confidence in the seat of judgment, I do not know that we find ourselves much better off than we were before. Affidavit-evidence is now universally despised, and to form an opinion of a public man from his memoranda and speeches, is to rely upon the same dead-alive testimony. A good portrait, as Carlyle used to say, is half the battle, but there is no great picture of Peel—the best is the word-portrait of Disraeli.

The angry passions of 1829 and 1845 have not permanently disfigured the character of Peel. They were fierce enough. Politicians who have lived through the years 1886–1894 can have no difficulty in appreciating the fury with which Peel was assailed by Protestant bigotry and Protectionist zeal, or how old friendships (so-called) were severed, and party ties broken. He was fortunate in one respect. Through it all Wellington stood by his side. It was no doubt hard to hear Sir Edward Knatchbull exclaim "Nusquam tuta fides," almost intolerable to have to submit to the heartless raillery of Disraeli, hardest of all to look into his own heart and know that his ill-timed obstinacy had (perhaps) robbed Canning of what in his hands might have been a glorious triumph, and his well-timed conversion deprived Villiers of what would have been a famous victory. It is, however, the business of politicians to do a good deal of night-poaching, and it is a pardonable weakness to believe

that an intelligent Providence must have meant *you* and not gentlemen opposite to save the country.

Peel entered Parliament for an Irish borough in 1809, when he was just of age. Is this a good thing? Lord Halifax, the Trimmer, thought not, and in his shrewd hints for the choice of Members of Parliament, gives his reasons. Mr. Gladstone, on the other hand, thought it was. Certainly few men become parliamentary hands quickly. For the business of a statesman ten years is a short apprenticeship, but it is a good-sized slice out of a life. There seems no very obvious reason why a seat in the House of Commons should either arrest a young man's intellectual development or ossify his imagination, yet if the young man is by the order of his mind slow-moving, prim, frigid and mechanical, if he possesses none of that dangerous but precious acid which dissipates platitudes and disintegrates falsehoods, if he is apt to be a little uncomfortable in the presence of actual fact, but very much at his ease when amplifying and expounding in sonorous periods bookish conceptions and notions; and if to these positive and negative qualities he adds a liking for office and an aptitude for business, then it is that an early adoption of party creeds and party connections and a complete immersion into the affairs of the hour, are certain to impede the free swing of the mind and the full muscular development of a truth-loving intelligence.

Robert Peel had an orderly mind, quick to absorb, ready to assimilate, and slow to deny. He never revolted from a lie, but slowly ceased to believe in it. He merely entertained his ideas, and therefore never found it hard to cease to be

"at home" to any of them. He had none of the mental vehemence of his great pupil, who, none the less, was equally destined to do a great deal of unloading. It has been said of Mr. Gladstone, and with perfect truth, that he was never either a Whig or a Protestant. He arrived at his Liberalism by paths untrodden by the huge hosts of his followers, who had to be content to cheer the result without studying the process. Peel, like Gladstone, was brought up among Tories, and received a sound classical education in Tory strongholds, from port-wine dons, and divines bent on being bishops, the very last people in the world to teach their pupils to verify the accepted formulas of Church and State. The remark used often to be made that Peel was sprung from the people. In the already old-fashioned days of which Mr. Samuel Smiles was the popular *vates*, "the rise of the Peel family" was a favourite subject for the thrifty muse, and there were sentimentalists ready to attribute Sir Robert's genuine devotion to the cause of labour and his fierce desire to cheapen living to his ancestry. But in England, where we are all woven strangely of the same piece, these things count for very little. Between a decent agricultural labourer and a decent duke there are no differences which cannot be easily accounted for by those personal habits which are engendered by their different ways of life. Twenty years in big houses, in labourers' cottages, in merchants' villas, in artisans' dwellings, in Whitechapel tenements, will explain all the differences noticeable between the varied ranks of her Majesty's lieges. Peel is said to have had a provincial accent. Of

the three great Lancashire orators of our own time, Lord Derby, Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright, the last alone was spotless in this matter; for a quick Lancastrian ear could easily detect his native accents in the scholarly tones of Gladstone, whilst they flourished unabashed in the manly discourse of the Rupert of debate. The Peel pedigree need not detain us. The gentleman-commoner of Christ Church of 1806 was like the rest of his brethren, except in one fortunate particular. He was the heir to great wealth, not made out of the ownership of the soil. Peel was destined to fight the landed interest, which then sought to throttle the nation, even as his high-spirited son is now engaged in fighting the drink interest, which seeks to throttle us. What made Peel's contest especially bitter was that the wounded country gentlemen had to confess that the pinion that impelled the fatal steel had been nourished in their own nurseries, and been awarded the pet diploma of the greedy monopolist, the representation in Parliament of the University of Oxford. And yet never was statesman more truly conservative in all his mental methods than Sir Robert Peel, whose tortured spirit never sought to escape from the blunt brutalities of the squires, or the poisoned invective of their hired bravo, by the simple expedient of throwing wide open the windows of his mind and letting the free air of heaven sweep through its chambers. The history of the landed interest in England from the date when it plundered the Church of the territories that were intended to be, and often were, the support of the poor and the shelter of the aged, to

the unhappy hour when it turned a deaf, because a selfish, ear to the report of the Devon Commission, has never yet been written; and to write it now would be, so far as the agricultural interest is concerned, to trample on a poverty-stricken race, who barely contrive to go on existing by avoiding those contributions to the Army and Navy which, under the name of death duties, are levied upon cash values only.

Insolent in the hour of its prosperity, the landed interest has become mean in more straitened circumstances. But even had its history been composed in Peel's time, he would have taken no pleasure in the perusal, so rooted was his love for the order of things as he found them. The conservatism of most men is based on fear and a lively sense of the risks to which all Governments are exposed. The surprising thing is that society should exist at all, and that dividends should go on being paid at the Bank. Any condition of things that has proved itself to be compatible with a social *status quo* is to be respected by statesmen, and, if possible, revered by the populace. Sobriety, security, and peace were the real objects of Peel's devotion. Had the Dissenters of England been as strong as the Roman Catholics in Ireland, Peel would have disestablished and disendowed the Church of England on the best terms he could get for her, nor would his pillow ever have been haunted by ghosts in lawn. He had a true statesman's horror of enthusiasts and martyrs. So that he might dodge revolution and avoid bloodshed, there were few sacrifices he was not prepared to make. He had not, indeed, reduced the art of

capitulation to the simple formula of his colleague the Great Duke, who, whenever driven into a corner, was content to put the question, "How is the Government of the King (or Queen) to be carried on?" and then, having answered it in a particular way, proceeded to repudiate all his former political notes-of-hand with the effrontery of a South American Republic. Peel was a man who intellectualised his apostasies. True it was that he was taught by circumstance, and trod the tortuous paths of party rather than the narrow way of truth; still, he had a mind which, like some plants, instinctively turned to the light. Seriousness has not been a common quality with English Prime Ministers. The light-heartedness of most of them is amazing. Even the horrors of the criminal code have never turned a politician's stomach. Peel was a serious Minister, always, so Mr. Disraeli complained, "absorbed in thought." The Condition of England Question weighed more heavily on the statesman than ever it did on the novelist, although the imaginative genius of the latter enabled him without pain or labour to see deeper into the cauldron than could the former. But Disraeli did nothing for England, Peel saved her. "There was always," said Mr. Disraeli half-contemptuously, "some person representing some theory or system exercising an influence over his mind." Forcible is the retort made by Mr. Thursfield in his short *Life of Peel*, the authority of which remains unimpaired by the elaborate publications of Mr. Parker: "To have learned the principles of currency and finance from Ricardo, Horner and Huskisson, the principles of criminal legislation

from Romilly and Mackintosh, and the principles of free trade from Villiers and Cobden, was not Peel's reproach but his everlasting honour."

No statesman of the century has left his mark so plainly inscribed upon both the Statute Book and the life and business of the nation as Sir Robert Peel. He it was who resumed cash payments, established a gold standard, and told us "What is a pound." He was the author of the Bank Charter Act, and of the sweet simplicity of the Three per Cents. We owe it to Sir Robert Peel that the Income Tax is always with us, and that a policeman is, or ought to be, at the corner of every street. The Budgets of 1842 and 1845 are chapters in our financial history, for was it not Peel who taught us to fight hostile tariffs with free imports? Across Ireland the names of most Chief Secretaries are writ in water, but Peel left behind him that constabulary force of which we hear every year when the Irish Estimates come on for discussion. The law reformer loves the name of Peel, who humanised the criminal code, and showed, at least, a willingness to listen to the voice of Bentham and to recast our judicature. Finally, he emancipated the Catholics, and carried free trade in corn. Here is a programme indeed, by the side of which that of Newcastle may well pale its ineffectual fires. Yet we are always told there was something sinister about the career of Peel. There is a slouch in the gait of our deliverer. What is it? It is to be found in Greville's famous maxim, "The Tories only can carry Liberal measures." The men behind Peel cried, "Traitor!" and the men in front of him murmured, "Thief!"

"The right honourable gentleman's life," said Mr. Disraeli, "has been one vast appropriation clause."

It was the subsequent boast of Disraeli, himself one of the most light-fingered of the fraternity, that he had educated his party, though what he really thought of the process to which he had subjected them it is better only guessing. Peel could not honestly say that he had educated his party, but as he succeeded in coercing it, no good Liberal will grudge him his splendid record of great achievements or his imperishable fame. In these respects Peel is an exception to the general rule that encompasses departed statesmen in a trailing cloud of forgetfulness.

Mr. Parker's three capacious volumes[1] enable us to form (if we are sufficiently imaginative and have any knowledge of affairs) an estimate of the great compass of Peel's public interests and his devotion to business. We see Mr. Gladstone's schoolmaster abroad in every page. Peel had a passion for good government and for competency in high places. In his disposition of patronage he was "a kinless loon," and passed over his brethren after a fashion which still excites our wonder. Nor was it only his own brothers; those of his colleagues fared no better.

We find Goulburn, who wanted his brother made a Judge, writing to Peel in 1835:

> When there are no superior qualifications evidently marking out a man for an office, it is, I think, impolitic to select for appointment those men who have been uniformly opposed to a Government or only recently converted. I may live [*mark the sarcasm*] in a peculiar society, but I can assure you

[1] *Sir Robert Peel from his Private Papers.* Edited for his Trustees by C. S. Parker. Three vols. London: John Murray.

that I find nothing more prejudicial to our interests than the impression which prevails that such is our course. It deadens the exertions of zealous friends, and it makes the large mass, namely, those who act on interested motives, oppose us as a matter of profitable speculation. I believe that we have suffered more from making Abercrombie Chief Baron than from any act of our last Administration. So much I have thought it right to say on public grounds (vol. ii. p. 273).

How familiar are the accents of the jobber! Mr. Goulburn was quite right in hinting that it was Peel, and not his Chancellor of the Exchequer, who kept peculiar society. Nothing is rarer in our public men than a genuine devotion to *all* branches of the public service. Peel kept his eye on everything, even meditating a reform of the Scottish judicature. One disadvantage of the democratic system is that a Prime Minister no longer feels himself responsible for good government. He awaits "a mandate" from a mob who are watching a football match.

Full, however, to overflowing as was Peel's public life, the three most interesting things in its retrospect are his handling of Catholic Emancipation, his attitude towards Parliamentary Reform, and his dealings with Wheat. It was the way he dealt with these questions that puzzled his friends, piqued his opponents, and brought down upon his head the wrath of Oxford Combination-rooms and the fury of farmers' ordinaries. Peel was long a puzzle. "What will Peel do?" was for decades as provocative a question as his own famous query, "What is a pound?"

It cannot be said that Mr. Parker's volumes throw any entirely new light upon Peel's attitude, but they enable us at our leisure and in the ample detail of Peel's own elaborate diction to follow the

mental operations and digest the conclusions of a cautious, sagacious, and ambitious man whose lot was cast in perilous times. Nor can we help being repeatedly reminded of incidents in the career of Mr. Gladstone and of similarities, both of style and in the treatment of public questions, existing between the master and the pupil.

The Catholic Question stared Peel in the face from the very beginning. It was like the Catholic University Question of to-day, left open. Cabinet Ministers were free to be Emancipators if they chose so long as they made no attempt upon the King's virtue. Peel had no passionate convictions about anything save the public credit and the administration of just laws by honest men, but his early associations with the stupid party, and the company he kept whilst Irish Chief Secretary from 1812 to 1818, had taught him to regard Protestant ascendancy as a condition of government not lightly to be disturbed. In 1817 his political education was sorely encumbered by his proudly donning the chains which Canning had gloriously renounced, which Gladstone was destined too long to clank—the Parliamentary representation of the University of Oxford, a constituency which has never consented to be represented by a man who has saved his country. The University muzzled Mr. Gladstone, it hindered and delayed Peel, who saw clearly enough that Catholic Relief was only a question of time. Canning openly espoused the cause, even as Mr. Balfour has done the kindred question of the present day. The House of Commons was at least equally divided; the House of Lords, despite a majority of forty against Relief,

has never really fought any measure of reform recommended to it by a Tory Minister; and as for the Crown, Peel's lofty spirit scorned a policy which should be founded (to use his own words) "merely on the will or scruples of the King." The contempt entertained both by Peel and Wellington for George IV. and William IV. gives quite a literary flavour to many of the letters of the two statesmen. But though Peel saw Emancipation afar off, he had no mind to be mixed up in it. It was Canning's question, and between Canning and Peel there was a very imperfect sympathy. Mr. Disraeli tells us that Canning was jealous of Peel, and that Peel did not like Canning. This need not surprise us. Peel was not famous for his friendships. The old Duke, whose behaviour to Peel was angelical, never could be got to believe that Peel did not actually dislike him. To keep Wellington and Peel on speaking terms was quite an occupation for a number of wealthy gentlemen, and inspired many a dull dinner-party in the thirties and forties. The old Tory party hated Canning, fierce anti-Reformer though he was, with the hatred it has ever felt "for d——d intellect." Arbuthnot writes to Peel just after Canning's death to remind him "that our great Tory and aristocratical support was caused by the dislike and dread of Canning." Peel relied upon Tory and aristocratical support, and, consequently, when Lord Liverpool retired, and Canning fiercely claimed the succession and obtained (somehow or another) a great hold upon the King, Peel and Wellington cleared out and left Canning to make terms with Lord Lansdowne and a section

of the Whigs. Peel did not leave on the Catholic Question, for that was not to be agitated; he left because he would not work with Canning. The old King of Terrors dominates Parliaments. Canning's sudden removal from the playhouse of St. Stephen's made it much easier for Peel to add a new part to his *répertoire*, namely, the character of an emancipator. Canning died in office in August, 1827. In January, 1829, a complete measure of Catholic Relief was decided upon by the Duke's Government, and the man to introduce it to the House of Commons was the statesman who, whenever Canning had advocated Emancipation, had risen from the same bench to protest against it in language which drew down upon him the benedictions of the Protestants of Ireland. Oxford revolted. Peel resigned his seat, and after a contest the University found a much fitter representative in another Sir Robert whose surname was Inglis. The Bill became law in March, 1829. Does anybody ask what became of the majority of forty against Emancipation in our second Chamber? The answer must be that in 1829 the House of Lords was Wellington's pocket-borough, just as in 1899 it is Lord Salisbury's. Had the Whigs introduced Catholic Emancipation in 1829 the Lords would have treated it as they did Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill in 1894; but as the measure was countersigned by Wellington they treated it as they did Lord Salisbury's Vaccination Bill in 1898. Were I a Tory averse to Socialistic measures I would rather rely upon the sober, deep-rooted conservatism of the English people than upon the House of Lords.

Peel's vindication is, of course, that fascinating river—the Father Tiber to whom all politicians pray—the course or current of events. The Clare election, the revolt of the tenants, the transfer by the will of Parliament of political power from one party to another! Let us listen for a moment to the grave voice of Peel:

This afforded a decisive proof not only that the instrument on which the Protestant proprietor had hitherto mainly relied for the maintenance of his political influence [the forty-shilling franchise for tenants] had completely failed him, but that through the combined exertions of the agitator and the priest—or, I should rather say, through the contagious sympathies of a common cause among all classes of the Roman Catholic population—the instrument of defence and supremacy had been converted into a weapon fatal to the authority of the landlord.

However men might differ as to the consequences which ought to follow the event, no one denied its vast importance. It was foreseen by the most intelligent men that the Clare election would be the turning-point in the Catholic Question, the point *partes ubi se via findit in ambas.*

"Concede nothing to agitation" is the ready cry of those who are not responsible, the vigour of whose decisions is often proportionate to their own personal immunity from danger and to their imperfect knowledge of the true state of affairs.

A prudent Minister before he determines against all concession, against any yielding or compromise of former opinions, must well consider what it is that he has to resist and what are his powers of resistance. His task would be an easy one if it were sufficient to resolve that he would yield nothing to violence or to the menace of physical force.

What was the evil to be apprehended? Not force, not violence, not any act of which the law could take cognisance. The real danger was in the peaceable and legitimate exercise of a franchise according to the will and conscience of the holder.

In such an exercise of that franchise, not merely permitted, but encouraged and approved by constitutional law, was involved a revolution in the electoral system of Ireland, the transfer of political power, so far as it was connected with representation, from one party to another (vol. ii., p. 48).

If the Irish Government could neither turn for aid to the then existing Parliament, nor could cherish the hope of

receiving it from one to be newly elected, could it safely trust for the maintenance of its authority to the extreme exercise of its ordinary powers, supported, in the case of necessity, by the organised and disciplined force at its command, namely, the constabulary and military force? (vol. ii. p. 49).

I deliberately affirm that a Minister of the Crown responsible at the time of which I am speaking for the public peace and the public welfare would have grossly and scandalously neglected his duty if he had failed to consider whether it might not be possible that the fever of religious and political excitement—which was quickening the pulse and fluttering the bosom of the whole Catholic population, which had inspired the serf of Clare with the resolution and energy of a freeman, which had in the twinkling of an eye made all consideration of personal gratitude, ancient family connection, local preferences, the fear of worldly injury, the hope of worldly advantage subordinate to one absorbing sense of religious obligation and public duty—whether, I say, it might not be possible that the contagion of that feverish excitement might spread beyond the barriers which, under ordinary circumstances, the habits of military obedience and the strictness of military discipline oppose to all such external influences (vol. ii. p. 50).

This surely is convincing. But should Peel have been the man to tackle the job? He did not want to do so. He begged hard to be allowed to stand aside. The Duke was a plain soldier, ready enough, as Huskisson once found, to take even a politician at his first word; but the Duke would not take Peel at his first or second word, but made it plain to him (as perhaps it was plain before) that without him the Relief Bill must be abandoned. "I entreat you, then, to reconsider the subject, and to give us and the country the benefit of your advice and assistance in this most difficult and important crisis." So wrote the Duke (vol. ii. p. 81).

Peel consented. It required enormous courage.

We were about to forfeit the confidence and encounter the hostility of a very great portion of our own party. The principle of concession had been affirmed by the House of

Commons in the last discussion by the very smallest majority —272 to 266. It had been negatived in the House of Lords by a majority of 40. The King was hostile, the Church was hostile, a majority probably of the people of Great Britain was hostile, to concession (vol. ii. p. 85).

Oh for an hour, in these cowardly days, of a statesman with a tithe of the courage of Sir Robert Peel!

"In a single session Peel and Wellington overcame the resistance of a hostile Sovereign, a hostile Church, a hostile House of Lords, and a public opinion fast becoming hostile." So writes Mr. Thursfield, who also reminds us of the fine compliment paid by Peel in his speech on the second reading to the injured "shade" of Canning. "Would he were here," cried Peel, "to enjoy the fruits of his victory!

"Tuque tuis armis, nos te poteremur Achille."

Admirably does Mr. Thursfield proceed:

The tribute was well merited and not ungenerously expressed; but perhaps, if the shade of Canning could have revisited the House of Commons and could have watched Peel, shorn of the prize for which both had contended, writhing in agony at the whips and scorns of time, the irony of circumstance, the revenge of neglected opportunities, and the reproaches of friends who felt themselves abandoned and betrayed, the words to rise almost unbidden to his phantom lips would have been:

"Pallas te, hoc vulnere, Pallas
Immolat, et pænas scelerato ex sanguine sumit."

There is no end to capping verses. The compliments rival politicians occasionally pay one another are apt to be a little overdone. Great questions belong to the nation and not to individuals, however eloquent or long-winded. Besides, it is always easier to be generous to the dead than just to the

living. Peel's conduct in this matter gave an envious stab at his reputation. He was "suspect" from that hour. One of his friends took on so about it that he had to be blooded (vol. ii. p. 94). He (the phlebotomised friend) got over it, for we find him in 1834 breathing a fervent prayer that Peel might be "destined by the Almighty to save the country at the moment of peril" (vol. ii. p. 262). Peel was the most prayed-over politician of recent times.

In the matter of Parliamentary Reform Peel was from the first a Moderate. He was the last man in the world to share Burke's romantic attachment to rotten boroughs, or the Duke of Wellington's babyish aversion to big towns; nor was he gifted or cursed with the foresight of Canning, who perceived that a reformed House of Commons must eventually prove fatal to the pretensions of the landed interest in the House of Lords. Speaking at Liverpool in 1820, Canning had asked:

> When once the House of Commons should become a mere deputation speaking the people's will, by what assumption of right could three or four hundred great proprietors set themselves against the national will?

Peel was in favour of going slowly in the matter, and when opportunity offered (as it frequently did), of giving large towns parliamentary representation; but the Duke was obdurate, and the omniscient Croker was certain that the country was indifferent. We all know what happened. The flames of Nottingham Castle and the Bristol mobs intimidated the House of Lords, who in 1832 yielded to fear as in 1829 they yielded to the Duke.

Peel's opposition to reform can best be explained in his own words:

> Why have we been struggling against the Reform Bill in the House of Commons? Not in the hope of resisting its final success in that House, but because we look beyond the Bill, because we know the nature of popular concessions, their tendency to propagate the necessity for further and more extensive compliances. We want to make the *descensus* as *difficilis* as we can—to teach young inexperienced men charged with the trust of government that, though they may be backed by popular clamour, they shall not override, on the first springtide of excitement, every barrier and breakwater raised against popular impulses; that the carrying of extensive changes in the Constitution without previous deliberation shall not be a holiday task; that there shall be just what has happened—the House sick of the question, the Ministers repenting they brought it forward, the country paying the penalty for the folly and incapacity of its rulers. All these are salutary sufferings, that may, I trust, make people hereafter distinguish between the amendment and the overturning of their institutions (vol. ii. p. 201).

When the second Reform Bill had been defeated in the Lords on Lyndhurst's amendment, and Lord Grey resigned, the Duke of Wellington, whose political stomach could digest anything, was ready and willing, and even anxious, to form an Administration, and become responsible for "an extensive measure" of parliamentary reform. He could not do this without Peel, and Peel would not on this occasion come to his assistance. The Duke never quite forgave Peel for this. Even Croker was on the Duke's side, but Peel was adamant. When reminded of his behaviour in 1829, he replied emphatically:

> It is *not* a repetition of the Catholic Question. I was then in office. I had advised the concession as a Minister. I should now assume office for the purpose of carrying the measure to which up to the last moment I have been inveterately opposed (vol. ii. p. 206).

There can be no doubt he was right. It was all very well for the hero of Waterloo to play what pranks he chose in the political arena, but Peel was not a soldier but a statesman. Besides, after the events that had happened a compromise was impossible.

Peel's connection with the duties on corn is a thrice-told tale. If he is the victor who remains in possession of the field, nothing can now be said to impair the fame of the great statesman who, though surrounded as he was in the House he so dearly loved by men impervious to reason and indifferent to human suffering, resolutely thrust them behind him, and pursued amidst "detractions rude" the path of Free Trade and gave the people bread. His conversion may have been slow, but it was sure. His face was always turned to the cheap markets. Cobden, a not too generous foe, as early as 1842 pronounced Peel a free-trader. His budgets made it plain, his speeches were full of Free Trade. Corn, doubtless, always stood by itself. The staple produce of the land could hardly do otherwise in the mind of the leader of a party which, as Lord Ashburton put it in 1841, "was pledged to the support of the land; that principle abandoned, the party is dissolved" (vol. ii. p. 507). It may well be that it was bad harvests and wet seasons that eventually forced Peel's hands, but it was not Peel's hands for which we may thank God—but his open mind. Let us listen again to the voice of Peel:

> The Tariff does not go half far enough. If we could afford it, we ought to take off the duty on cotton-wools and the duty on foreign sheep's wool (vol. ii. p. 529).

We must make this country a cheap country for living and thus induce parties to remain here, enable them to consume more by having more to spend (vol. ii. p. 530).

The danger is not low prices from the Tariff, but low prices from inability to consume.

If Sir Charles Burrell had such cases before him as I have of thousands and tens of thousands in want of food and employment at Greenock, Paisley, Edinburgh, and a dozen large towns in the manufacturing districts, he would not expect me to rend my garments in despair if "some excellent jerked beef from South America" should get into the English market and bring down meat from 7½d. or 8d. a pound (vol. ii. p. 531).

To the Marquis of Ailsa Peel wrote in March, 1842:

Whatever the future may be, no one can think the present state of things very satisfactory. If I were a landed proprietor in the West of Scotland, and saw 17,000 persons supported during the winter, as in one Scotch town, Paisley, by charitable contributions, I should seriously inquire whether the continuance of such a state of things was quite compatible with the security or, at least, the enjoyment of property (vol. ii. p. 527).

Such sarcasm was quite thrown away upon the Marquis of Ailsa; it might as well have been addressed to the Craig of that ilk.

To get a complete understanding of the progress of this question, Mr. Parker's volumes must be supplemented by Mr. Morley's *Life of Cobden*, and by the speeches of Mr. Villiers and Mr. Bright. But the more the times are studied the more will Peel, as a practical statesman and a man of judgment and devotion, stand head and shoulders above his contemporaries.

An able writer in a recent number of the *Quarterly Review* is indisposed to call Peel a great man because he lacked imagination and preferred to co-operate with Wellington and Sir James Graham than to bluster with Palmerston or hob-a-nob with

Disraeli. It all depends upon your standard. What is a pound? In the currency of Parliament and in the estimation of the country Peel was a great man.

In one respect only do I find myself like Mr. Goulburn "in a peculiar society." I (no doubt I am wrong) deeply regret the publication of the Disraeli letters. Magnanimity is so beautiful a thing that its essential privacy should be preserved as a noble family tradition even at the expense of the public. Had Peel chosen in 1846 to produce the letter of 1841, of the existence of which he gave Disraeli a pretty broad hint, nobody could have complained and Disraeli could have replied. Peel did not do so, and what he, magnanimously, in the heat of conflict, and in the face of insult, forbore from doing, Mr. Parker does in 1899. It is of the essence of magnanimity that it should be complete and eternal. Unless it is that it is no magnanimity at all. To suppress a document for fifty years and until the man who wrote it is dead is no kindness. No good has been done by publication. For a couple of days the Tadpoles and the Tapers, that breed of curs, ran about sniffing and snuffing over the letters; the young lions of the press roared over them, rejoicing that their client, the public, should be let behind the scenes. But the many-headed Beast is not nearly so big a fool as those who cater for his capacious maw would often have us believe. The many-headed knows its Disraeli perfectly well, and how he never pretended to be a man of nicety. He ate his peck of dirt and achieved his measure of dignity. In the vulgar struggle for existence Disraeli did some mean and shabby things; the letter of 1841 was perhaps one

of them, the denial of it in 1846 was perhaps another, but a mean and shabby man Disraeli was not, and his reputation, such as it is, stands just where it did before these disclosures. The two letters are out of place in these stately memorials of a saviour of society. They jar upon you like a vulgar word scribbled on the pedestal of a noble statue. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer the other day made his annual reference to the rise in the value of our shares in the Suez Canal, never were the cheers louder. Disraeli, too, had his day; and though, for my part, I would as soon think of coupling Dr. Johnson with Jacques Casanova as Peel with Disraeli, I can still, remembering all the differences in the circumstances of the two men, find room for a regret that these memoirs should be made the vehicle of seeking to cast an unnecessary slur upon the memory of a man who, when all is said and done, will remain the author of the finest literary tribute to the character of Peel ever likely to be written.

THE PRIVATE LETTERS OF SIR ROBERT PEEL[1]

(*The Nation*, 1921)

THIS is a very interesting book, for from almost every page strong sidelights are cast upon the mentality of a man who was not only amongst the greatest (the list is not very long) of English statesmen, but was declared to be by one who had watched him in the House of Commons at only too close quarters "the greatest member of Parliament that ever lived."

Sir Robert Peel, though a keen "shot" and an indefatigable slaughterer of small game, was a slow-moving man, both in mind and body. His temperament was not only pre-eminently conservative and cautious, but was not without a touch of that slavishness so noticeable in his most distinguished pupil, Gladstone. And yet what a life he led the Tory Party! A cat among the pigeons! And how exciting and mobile was his own political career, and how gravely, yet how courageously, he faced the questions of the day, and talked with his bitter enemies in the gate.

In these harum-scarum days when no one can guess beforehand what a Prime Minister will say, or how he will say it, it is something of a relief to while away a few hours over three admirably edited

[1] *The Private Letters of Sir Robert Peel.* Edited by George Peel (Murray).

volumes of Mr. C. S. Parker, entitled *Sir Robert Peel. From his Private Papers* (1891–1899). No finer memorial, dignified but moving, exists of a public man; and there as on a pedestal, "more lasting than brass," will ever stand the tall and stately figure of the Sir Robert who kept revolution at bay, and who is as firmly imbedded in our national history as the very different figure of that other Sir Robert, who a century earlier prevented the Stuarts from returning to Whitehall.

Peel may be accounted lucky in his memorial volumes. Disraeli, in his bizarre, but ever fascinating *Life of Lord George Bentinck*, has devoted a chapter to the character and personality of the man he tortured and defamed—a chapter that tempts us to make the same smuggish remark which Milton has put into the mouth of Adam when the Almighty shows him for the first time the beautiful Mother of Mankind:

> This turn doth make amends.

Disraeli has certainly succeeded in doing what Sir Robert himself usually failed to do—in making Peel interesting. Furthermore, another writer, to us as agreeable and more edifying than Disraeli, Dr. Newman, has in one of his discursive contributions to controversial literature thrown light upon some aspects of Peel's mentality.

Towards the end of 1840, Sir Robert, setting the example to Sir Barnes Newcome, who lectured his constituents on "Mrs. Hemans and the Poetry of the Affections," gave an address at Tamworth, on the opening of a reading-room to be run on non-sectarian lines, to which discourse we see, from the

volume now under review, Lady Peel writing to her "dear, dearest Frederick" refers: "You shall certainly have your Papa's pamphlet of his beautiful speech at Tamworth as soon as it comes out. The one you have seen advertised is not the true one" (p. 175). This "beautiful speech," as reported in the newspapers, attracted Newman's attention, and being, as considering the occasion it could hardly help being, full of "Broughamism," with a touch of "Benthamism," and a glorification of the "Pursuit of Learning under Difficulties," and the "Diffusion of Useful Knowledge," drew from this ever eager controversialist on such subjects four letters to the *Times*, which may now be read with delight in Newman's *Discussions and Arguments* under the title "The Tamworth Reading-Room." More eloquent letters have never been addressed to an editor. When it is a question of ridiculing the pretensions of man to be a reasoning animal, Montaigne, Pascal, and Newman attain the same rare altitudes; and the way they exercise their reasoning powers in abusing reason (of whom, one cannot help seeing, they are all the time desperately afraid) never fails to excite our admiration. In the course of these letters Newman has occasion to make many interesting and searching remarks about Sir Robert Peel, for whose statesmanship, character, and piety he had (being, like Peel, an Oxford man) great regard, though the one Oxonian could never forgive the other for saying that the "pleasures of physical science" could impart "consolation" to a dying man.

Peel's grandson has in this volume (and we are grateful to him for it) lit another candle for us, a

domestic light that enables us, if so minded, to gain further insight into the character of the great Repealer. Domestic letters do not lend themselves to criticism. Sir Robert loved his wife so well as to be occasionally piqued at the slowness of her response, and she loved him so well as not infrequently to be jealous. They had a fine large family of handsome children, in whose society they both took pleasure from the cradle. The slings and arrows of outrageous political fortune never penetrated their comfortable homesteads. They had fine tastes, plenty of money, good looks, position, and patronage; and if they were not really religious in the Newmanic sense, they thought they were, and said their unfaltering prayers accordingly. It is on the small things of life that domestic letters turn the light, and from this volume it is made abundantly plain that Sir Robert Peel was a man not easy to please, and that though stiff in his own manners and by no means the best of company, he was easily bored in that of other people.

His letters to his wife when visiting alone would make up a Gallery of Frights, though, as his grandson shrewdly observes, this "stringency of tone may be accounted for by a natural desire to minimise the social enjoyments in which his wife did not share" (p. 73).

> We had the Archbishop and Mrs. Sutton. You never saw so vulgar a woman as Mrs. Sutton (p. 51).
>
> I wish you could see Mrs. Huskisson's dress and affected manner, making ugliness fifty times more ugly (p. 61).
>
> I do not recollect when I have been more surprised than on the appearance of Mrs. Baring in the drawing-room before dinner. . . . Someone told us that though not a perfect beauty, she had fine eyes. I could scarcely believe my own when I saw a short and ugly, stumpy woman (p. 74).

Lady G. Fane I have long thought the most impertinent and odious woman in England (p. 87).

Three frightful sisters of Lord Portarlington (p. 118).

And so on.

Nor were dinner parties always endurable.

We had a most vulgar dinner yesterday at Sir James Flower's house—a bad repetition of the Fish Dinner. Eternal puffing of bad wine. But the host is the most remarkable attender in the House of Commons of all the Members. He has dined every day at two o'clock, arrived at the House at four, has never left it, and out of 221 divisions has been in 211, more than any member of the Government.

By his dinners he has gained considerable influence, has never asked a favour, and has never voted against the Government. He deserves from me, therefore, that I should undergo the penance of sitting next to him at dinner and hearing his remonstrances against mixing water with wine (p. 245).

The number of dull dinner parties that were given in those days in order to keep Wellington and Peel on speaking terms was abnormal—and we cannot but feel sorry for Sir James Flower, who probably found Peel every bit as dull as the great man did him. But we suppose he got some satisfaction out of it which Peel did not.

But we must end on a higher note. The real Peel—the great Peel—is revealed to us in a conversation too long to be here quoted, but which is set out at length on page 285 of Mr. George Peel's book. The scene is Peel's house in Whitehall Gardens, the date is 1847, and the recorder of the conversation is the Comte de Jarnac, the representative of Louis Philippe at the Court of St. James's.

I found myself after dinner sitting next my host. . . . He spoke to me first of the Socialist writings of Louis Blanc, which he had studied very closely, and asked me as to the extent of their influence in France. I expressed the hope that such appeals to revolt against the inevitable conditions

of civilised society would never find many dupes or victims among a population so intelligent as our own.

Sir Robert listened to me with close attention, in that thoughtful attitude which was his wont, his head a little bowed, his cheek resting on his hand, slightly inclining his head when my words accorded with his own feelings, and shaking it sadly when he could not share in my optimism.

At length he looked up and began to speak. Such writings, he argued, must not be judged by the effect they may produce upon the fortunate ones of this world whom education or enlightenment can preserve in comfort. But our civilisation has had the result of dooming numberless millions of human beings to an existence of perpetual labour, to profound ignorance and to sufferings as difficult to remedy as they are undeserved. What ferments will not be produced in these cramped intelligences, in their embittered hearts, by such passionate invitations to their hopes, to their desires, and to their revenge?

And so on the conversation rolled! Sir Robert may not have been an original thinker, but he supplies food for thought as much now as in 1847.

JOHN BRIGHT[1]

1911

I AM by this time a very hardened speaker, and have long since lost all compassion for my audience. Why should I have any compassion? I have myself suffered many things at the mouths of many orators, and if I have suffered why should not you? But I admit that on this especial occasion I am beset with something which reminds me of what I used to feel and which I suppose I may perhaps call modesty. I am beset with shyness. It really does seem to me something which savours of impertinence that I should invite the people of Rochdale to come and hear me talk about John Bright. It is almost an outrage.

What can I say really worthy of so great an occasion? I feel that all I can do is to take pains to do my best. Ah, yes. It is all very well to say, "hear, hear," but that involves some serious consequences for you—for whenever I feel it my duty to take pains to do my best I feel myself constrained and forced to abandon the easy facilities, the spontaneities, the parentheses and vagrant fancies of the spoken word.

Whenever I feel it my duty to do my best I take to my pen and produce a manuscript. Silence! However, I assure you, as in all human things, there is compensation about this, for my

[1] An address delivered at Rochdale on 16th November, 1911. (London, T. Fisher Unwin.)

manuscript will take a shorter time to read than my speech, had I left myself free, would have taken me to deliver. There is compensation in that. Therefore, without any more ado and regardless of your feelings—I produce out of my pocket my manuscript and proceed to read it. But I hope to be able to do so after a fashion which will at all events enable my voice to reach to the end of this very beautiful and excellent hall, about the acoustic properties of which I know nothing, for I am sorry to say, and am ashamed to say, that this is the first time I have ever been in Rochdale.

This is primarily a meeting of Lancashire men and women, of Lancashire Members of Parliament, and other representative bodies, to do honour in the place of his birth and habitation to a famous Lancashire man on the one-hundredth anniversary of his first infant cry. My right to be here, my only right, is that I, too, by birth and breeding belong to the County Palatine. Now, if the promoters of this meeting had been wiser men than they are—they are wise, but they might have been wiser—they would have selected in my place to-night an older man, someone who knew John Bright well. This is the centenary of Bright's birth, and there are still, happily, living amongst us in this town and in this hall, many, I doubt not, who knew him well; who sat at meat with him; who walked and talked and lived with him; who knew John Bright as he lived and moved and had his being. But when it comes to be the centenary of his death, March, 1989, if that occurrence is celebrated, there will be no one in the wide world who ever set eyes upon him; and his personality,

if transmitted at all, can then only be so by means of portraits, statues, busts, letters, speeches, biographies, and the recorded evidence of friends and enemies—and be it observed that for the purpose of transmitting a personality, a spiteful enemy may do it better than a vapid friend. Lucky fellow was Dr. Johnson, who had his portrait painted by Sir Joshua, and his life written by Boswell! We cannot all—no one, perhaps—expect such good fortune as that. But nevertheless it is of extreme importance, while there is yet time, to preserve and place on record all the *personalia* of an illustrious dead man, and therefore I regret that you have not here before you to-night someone who knew John Bright well.

My acquaintance with him was of the slightest. I heard him speak twice, and twice only, in Liverpool, but I never heard him speak in the House of Commons, and speak triumphantly as he often did in the House of Commons. And when I say triumphantly I am not referring to triumph in the lobby, but to something greater and nobler than that. I say to hear a man speak triumphantly in the House of Commons is a supreme test of British oratory. That good fortune I never had. On one occasion only I met him face to face. It was on a Yorkshire moor near Ilkley Wells. He had, I should surmise, been shut up in the house for a few days and was rejoicing in his convalescence. As he walked he threw open his arms and quoted with force and feeling the well-known lines:

> See the wretch who long has tost
> On the thorny bed of pain,
> At length repair his vigour lost,
> And walk and breathe again.

> The meanest floweret of the vale,
> The simplest note that swells the gale,
> The common sun, the air, the skies,
> To him are opening paradise.

After quoting these lines, Bright by some slip of the memory attributed them to Goldsmith. I had the courage to murmur "Gray," and was rewarded by a glance that convinced me that this great orator, like others I have known since, did not always love to be corrected.

Half a century ago the three foremost orators in England were all Lancashire men. Lord Derby, so conveniently dubbed the "Rupert of debate" by the first Lord Lytton in a poem that ought not to be half-forgotten, Mr. Gladstone, and Mr. Bright; I have listened to all three, and the only one of them whose speech did not instantly betray his Lancashire origin was Bright. His accents were faultless. If to speak your native tongue nobly and well and to write it legibly are the best proofs of education, John Bright was not only what I should think the general verdict has found him to be—the greatest orator of his time—but also the best educated man. I am not, however, prepared to admit that education cannot do you a better turn than help you to become an orator and a calligraphist. And here to-night we are concerned not merely with the orator or with the calligraphist, but with John Bright as a whole.

The first question to ask about anybody is: Has he any character? "Most women," wrote an unmarried poet, "have no character at all." Pope was wrong, not right, in writing "most," but had he said—and there was nothing he could not tag into his rhymes—had he said that many people,

men and women alike, have no character worth investigating, so insipid are they, he would have avoided satire and told the whole truth, which satire never does. But whatever may be the numbers of these people without characters, be they large or be they small, they are not worth keeping, even on the top shelves of your library. Now, John Bright had a character which I am sure he exhibited in the nursery within a few hours of his birth, in the House of Commons, in the Reform Club, wherever he was. He put it in his speeches. It lurks in his letters. It exploded in his talk. It formed his marvellous style. You saw it clearly in his face and figure, in his manner of holding himself; in all that he said or did.

He was not a man to-day and a woman to-morrow. There was a great deal more than a note of immutability in his character. He was all through his life very much the same man. He might easily have been born in surroundings and exposed to circumstances which would have come into early collision with these innate characteristics. And then, why then, there would have been a great deal of trouble for somebody. Think of J. A. Froude, born in the house of an archdeacon, who would not even allow a copy of *The Pilgrim's Progress* to come into it. That is the sort of domestic discipline to which many men are exposed, sometimes for good and sometimes for evil; but it was a sort of discipline Bright was destined to escape. He was born and bred amongst the Society of Friends, who from the first seem to leave their young people very much alone without creeds or catechisms, to think for themselves, and are indeed

somewhat proud of their mental exclusiveness and perpetual minority.

Quakers, as they are commonly called, have no particular passion for any other catholicity than that of the spirit. Emerson somewhere said, "If a man would be great he must be a Nonconformist" —meaning thereby not a sectarian of any particular kind, but a spirit which stands bold and erect among the mob of worshippers, and asks itself which of all the shrines is best entitled to the homage of his knee. Most of us are born in chains and die ere we are half emancipated. But I can find no trace in the early days of Bright of strife with authority or even of the domination of great names. All through his life—so at least it appears to me—Bright was a solitary thinker. He was not gregarious in his habits of thought. He liked to do what he liked and in his own way. He had no especial fondness for gathering himself together with others. And I suspect, although I may be wrong, he rarely attended any public meeting which he did not address. The attitude of his mind was that of a solitary; reverential towards God (a very untheological deity), but by no means so towards any of God's creatures. He was very critical and indisposed, easily, at all events, to recognise established reputations.

Mobs of all sorts he hated as only a Radical can, but his particular detestation was a well-dressed mob composed of those who had taken university degrees and thought you could make the foreigner pay by the imposition of a tariff.

It has been hinted to me, but I can hardly believe it, that some excellent people in this

neighbourhood have fought a little shy of this celebration, fearing lest it might assume the complexion of a party meeting, held to do honour to a party man.

John Bright was never a party man, unless—and here I may make an exception—unless it were during that very short and comparatively inglorious period of his life when he was a Cabinet Minister.

No Party Whip ever drove Bright into a lobby. What is the chief note of a merely party man? It is surely mobility. The party man is impressionable, fluid, transitional. His is an expansive creed, framed with one eye, at all events, upon the electorate. Bright was none of these things. He was always a Free Trader out and out. He was always a franchise man on bold and simple lines. He was always against Church Establishments, whether in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, England, or anywhere else. He always preached Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform, and if and so far as the Liberal Party agreed with him on these subjects he agreed with them—but not otherwise.

He hated Palmerston, disliked Russell, and although he loved yet he differed from Gladstone. Nor did he share many, if any, of the nascent enthusiasms of the young Liberal or Tory democrat. He stood alone, thinking for himself, a great and scornful Parliamentary figure, and orator, but no party man.

Bright, I repeat, had character. It is easier to discern character than to analyse it. To analyse character is a rude and dangerous pastime, but it has always had for me a great fascination. John Bright, as I read his character, was a positive

man with perhaps an unspeculative mind, and without what I can only call historical curiosity. I don't think he ever took very great pains to discover precisely how things happened in the past. When he once got a good grip of a subject, and his grip was usually good, he was content.

This lack of curiosity is the besetting sin of great orators and politicians. I remember years ago trying, in vain, to induce a very eminent politician indeed, who was then much disposed to boast his descent from one of the two thousand ministers who were ejected from their livings in the Church of England in the time of Charles II., to try and find out how this dispossessed ancestor first got possession of the living from which he was ejected. In other words, to find out, if possible, whom he turned out during the time of the Great Rebellion. I offered to lend him my copy of Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy* (in folio) to aid him in this, as it seemed to me, admirable enterprise, but he hardly hearkened unto me. He was not interested in this part of our Church history; only in an isolated fact that lent itself to oratorical utterance before a friendly and therefore uncritical audience. This is a temptation to which all orators, and even politicians who are not orators, are subject, and if it fits in, as it sometimes does, with a temperamental lack of historical curiosity it may lead, it almost must lead, to very short and therefore false views, and certainly to an unsympathetic treatment of men in the past whose chief difference from ourselves was that they lived in different times.

But before going on to deal with the great political causes with which John Bright's public

life was so gloriously connected, I would like to say a word or two more about the general aspect of his most interesting character, as illustrated by his outlook upon the world as he saw it in his day and generation.

We live now, ladies and gentlemen, in 1911, in very fine-strung times, which have—and for this I, for one, cannot profess to blame them—long since grown tired of statistics of merely material progress. Railways, in our jaded minds, are unpleasantly associated with strikes, newspapers with libel actions, libraries with dust, and education with rates. Old-fashioned raptures about progress are voted middle-class—a dreadful thing to be—provincial, "awful," vulgar, early Victorian. Of all these old-fashioned raptures, John Bright, in many delicate circles, is considered by virtue of his supreme genius to be the sacred *vates* or poet.

Bright's imagination was undoubtedly immensely affected by the spectacle of the world as it was unfolding under his eyes. Remember that he was born—we cannot forget that to-night—a hundred years ago. The first time he went to London he travelled outside a stage-coach called "Peveril of the Peak." Why a coach with four horses should be called by the name of the very slowest of Sir Walter Scott's novels I do not know.

It started from Market Street, Manchester, at eight o'clock in the evening, and reached London at five o'clock the next afternoon. This first journey of Bright's was made in the famous year 1832, and by a happy chance on the very night that this great orator that was to be was driving through England, the House of Lords was sitting up

debating the Reform Bill, which was carried by a majority of nine two hours after Bright saw London for the first time. He was twenty-one hours on the road, and his outside seat cost him £3 10s.

Now let us be fair to this great man. Were not George and Robert Stephenson great men worthy to be sung or sounded in eloquent praise? Were not the engineers and scientific mechanics who carried out this mighty innovation, were not the Manchester and Liverpool merchants, who planked down the money, huge sums, necessary to fight the landed interest for years in the committee rooms of both Houses of Parliament—were they not great citizens well entitled to the honour of succeeding generations?

It was, indeed, a mighty and a sudden change which we people living in these days—except when there is a strike, when the most *dilettante* critic is the first to shout out—perhaps find it rather difficult to appreciate. Mr. Gladstone was fond, in conversation, of recording the fact that it had taken Sir Robert Peel on a famous occasion in 1834—when he was in a tremendous hurry to form an Administration—just as long a time, namely twelve days, to make his celebrated journey from Rome to London as it had taken the Emperor Constantine 1500 years before him to make precisely the same journey, travelling by the same methods and the same route.

I do not vouch for the details of this anecdote, for Gibbon, who is my only authority in such matters, tells me that the Emperor Constantine, who was most anxious to come to York to get a farewell blessing of his father, and also the Empire,

did not start from Rome at all, but further away, from Nikomedia in Asia Minor, that he did not travel by way of Rome but through what we now call Turkey, along the shores of the Adriatic, by Trieste, Switzerland, and across France to Boulogne. However that may be, the fact remains that an English Prime Minister, or would-be Prime Minister, in 1834, could not travel to form an Administration any quicker than could the Emperor Constantine at the beginning of the fourth century in making practically the same journey in order to inherit a great Empire.

That brings home to our minds how stagnant the world had been in this great matter of locomotion. Was it nothing to witness this mighty transformation both by land and sea? When in 1836 John Bright, on a steamboat, visited the shores and islands of the Mediterranean, that inland sea which "moans with memories," was his imagination not to be stirred by the fact that the boat he was in, on arriving at these islands was at once made the subject of intense interest and inquiry? All the islanders ran down and flocked round it to see what wonderful thing it was, just as tens of thousands of years earlier their predecessors may have done round the first seagoing vessel with sails. Are not these great transformations worthy of the poet's mind? Or is imagination to be confined entirely to books? Was telegraphy not worth a word?

Bright was greatly affected by all these marvels, these novelties, not particularly on the scientific side, for like Lord Derby and Mr. Gladstone he belonged to the pre-scientific age, but on the

broadly human side. When Bright thought of a line of rails running through the silent land, gleaming in the sun, glistering in the rain, he was not thinking of fares and freights. His imagination drew him out to think of the husband and the wife, the son or daughter hurrying home along these same rails quickly and cheaply to some sick chamber, it may be to receive some final farewell, or to some family gathering or festivity.

I greatly admire—and undoubtedly I ask you to do the same—I admire Bright's hearty contempt and indifference for the *dilettante*. He had a good word to say even for photography, and for those woebegone volumes, at least they are now mostly woebegone, with cracked bindings and stained morocco—the old *carte-de-visite* album, a melancholy object in most of our homes. But Bright, speaking here in Rochdale in 1877, threw this broad human light on the subject. He said:

> Now, even in the humblest cottage there may be portraits of those who are loved and absent, a thing which before was impossible.

"And there may be," he goes on, for he was a most courageous speaker, "there may be a little book in which all the members of the family are represented, and which it is often pleasing for the family themselves or for their friends to examine and to admire." And he concludes, "so that we find this: that science comes to us like the air, and the light, and the warmth, and the sunshine, and the shower." In Bright's hands, and on his manly tongue, these themes of material progress became no vulgar trade-catalogues of rival manufacturers grabbing at gain, but told a stirring tale

of human life and enterprise and energy and the joys that are "in widest commonalty spread."

It now only remains for me to enumerate the great causes and events with which Bright's name is inseparably associated in our history, for you at once to recognise how impossible it would have been for me, at all events, to deal with them one by one within the compass of an address. To have done so would have been not only to inflict on you an unreasonable portion of my weariness, but completely to have failed either to do justice to the subject or to the varied energies of the great orator in whose honour we are met. Prominent among those great causes are the repeal of the Corn Laws, the Crimean War, the American Civil War, and the anti-slavery movement, the problem of India, the problem of Ireland, Parliamentary reform, and the doctrine of a free church in a free state. This list is incomplete, but it is long enough to prove my point: how impossible it would have been for me to do justice to them.

The Anti-Corn Law League has for me all the fascination that belongs to a genuine thought-movement as opposed to, or as distinguished from, a mere political agitation—useful as political agitations may often be. In this movement, which filled the trying years 1838 to 1845, Bright and Cobden, Cobden and Bright, were twin brethren. It is childish—because impossible—to hope to do justice to all the soldiers who take part in an intellectual conflict like this. The reputations of all great leaders of revolt are largely based on injustice to the claims of men whose brains these leaders have ruthlessly ransacked, whose best

things they have calmly appropriated. Why, if it comes to that, the real founder of that remarkable Oxford Movement—the Tractarian Movement—which was running its course at this very time, was not John Henry Newman of Oriel, but a Cambridge man—my own University—Hugh James Rose of Trinity College. It is impossible in the history of a great movement to do justice to all its great men.

Bright's affection and admiration for Cobden—whose spirit, so he tells us in his old age, visited him every night in his dreams and consoled him—was romantic and unbounded, which in a man little given to admiration is most significant. In the address at Bradford in 1877, when Cobden's statue was unveiled, Bright's eloquence seemed to reach its very highest level, and produced one of the world's masterpieces, alike of composition and of feeling. From this address I will take a well-known passage, descriptive of the great movement I have placed first in my list of Bright's activities:

> Now do not suppose [says Bright] that I wish you to imagine that he and I, when I say "we," were the only persons engaged in this great question. We were not even the first, though afterwards, perhaps, we became the foremost before the public; but there were others before us, and we were joined not by scores, but by hundreds and by thousands, and afterwards by countless multitudes, and finally famine itself, against which we had warred, joined us, and a great minister was converted, and minorities became majorities, and finally the barrier was entirely thrown down. And since then, though there has been suffering, and much suffering, in many homes in England, yet no wife and no mother and no little child has been starved to death as the result of a famine made by law. Now [he proceeds] if you cast your eyes over the globe what is it you see there? Look at Canada. Look at the United States, whether on the Atlantic seaboard or on the Pacific slope. Look at Chili. Look at the Australian colonies. Look at the great and rich province of Bengal. Look on the shores of the Black Sea and the Baltic, wherever the rain falls,

wherever the sun shines, wherever there are markets and granaries and harvest fields, there there are men and women everywhere gathering that which comes to this country for the food of our people, and our fleets traverse every sea and visit every port and bring us the food which only about thirty years ago the laws of this civilised and Christian country denied to its people. You find it in Holy Writ that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." We have put Holy Writ into an Act of Parliament, and since then, of that fulness every man and woman and little child in this country may freely and abundantly partake.

Of the Crimean War I need say nothing, for it has long stood condemned at the bar of history. Avoidable in its origin, ill-conceived in its strategy, ill-executed in its operation, wasteful of blood and treasure, it settled nothing and got rid of nothing. I should be a happier man than I am to-night, could I believe that such blunders, bringing in their train even worse disasters, were incapable of repetition.

The American Civil War, the most stupendous event of the last century, excited in the breast of John Bright contending hatreds. He hated war as few men did, but he hated human slavery even more, and he believed the two were inextricably woven together in this direful calamity. Bright was perhaps the first well-known Englishman to love the United States of America, "the great Republic of the West," as he used to call it. He had bathed it in his marvellous fancy, and he had painted it with all the colours of the rainbow. To see it armed for mutual slaughter was indeed a maddening spectacle.

Feeling ran high in those days. I remember a tradesman in Liverpool being ordered by the police to remove a portrait of Lincoln from his window because all good Tories stopped and spat

at it as they passed. And the stormiest meeting I ever heard of was one in the Philharmonic Hall in the same city, or town, as it was then well content to be called, where Henry Ward Beecher vainly attempted for the space of an hour and a half to address an audience of cotton brokers and their clerks who were only waiting for a declaration of war with the Northern States to cheer themselves hoarse. Bright's part in this great transaction was a noble one. It has earned him the affection of the "great Republic of the West" and of her children, and the respect of every intelligent man here at home.

To India and her affairs Bright probably gave more study than to any other subject. He was falsely accused of desiring to withdraw from India. He never desired anything of the sort. He wished to see India well and sensibly governed, and his word of advice was "decentralise." We may perhaps hear more of it.

As to Ireland, the most illuminating speeches on this subject in early days, and in some respects they have never been equalled, were made by Bright and Disraeli. And my advice to all young people preparing for the fray—on one side or the other—is to study these speeches of those two men on that subject, for they are lit up by genius, sympathy, and understanding. Bright had clearly grasped before any other Englishman the great truth that the land problem lay at the root of Irish difficulties, and he has the honour, and it is a great honour, of being the pioneer of the great policy of land purchase in Ireland. He also won once for all the affection of the Irish race by his

early recognition of the place America had come to occupy in their sad hearts.

Speaking in Dublin, a city which too seldom has had the chance of listening to great English orators, he said:

> You will recollect that when the ancient Hebrew prophet prayed in his captivity he prayed with his window open towards Jerusalem. You know that the followers of Mahomet, when they pray, turn their faces towards Mecca. When the Irish peasant asks for food, and freedom, and blessing, his eye follows the setting sun, the aspirations of his heart reach beyond the wide Atlantic, and in spirit he grasps hands with the great Republic of the West.

Who is wise, says Holy Scripture, understandeth these things.

I have now used up much of my time and your patience—yet how much have I left unsaid! Not a word have I uttered about peace or retrenchment, or about that Parliamentary vote to which Bright all his days attached an importance that seemed sheer madness to his great contemporary, Thomas Carlyle. That one generation should differ from another is natural enough, else were we sterilised, but it adds terribly to the bewilderment of simple folk when they find, as they too often do, that the foremost men of each generation think each other stark, raving mad.

Parting company with a man like Bright, who held positive opinions and expressed them clearly, vehemently, and without reserve, who poured himself out in so many great strifes, who practised no economies of that truth in which he believed, and never concealed for a moment his deep-rooted conviction that the causes with which he identified himself were bound to prevail, it is impossible to

prevent a certain note of sadness entering into our farewell. Were Bright here to-day reading our newspapers what would he say? His dreams have not yet come true. Retrenchment? I dare not mention the amount of last year's estimates. Peace? O'er the restless waves of what inland sea or mighty ocean does peace securely spread her wings? And as for the great Republic of the West, she has travelled far along a very different path from the one that Bright's glowing fancy painted for her. What to-day are the prospects of humanity? What chances has she? This is an age which takes upon itself to sneer at theology, and no doubt if a theology becomes incredible, there is an end to it; but theology, alone of the subjects which claim the grave attention of mortals, does at all events proffer an answer to this searching question. But although the devil is not dead, as the cheerful optimist in Charles Reade's *Cloister and the Hearth* used to go about declaring he was—though the devil is not dead, there is no reason why we should lose courage. The world, for all we know, may yet be in the nursery. I am sure its inmates are childish enough to afford good grounds for that belief. John Bright's thought, all his thoughts and all his hopes, and all his dreams, though necessarily limited in their range and, it may well be, inadequate in their scope, were tinged with the glory that comes streaming from the Master Light, whom we may address in the inspired language of the great poet dear to Bright himself, Wordsworth:

> Uphold us—cherish—and have power to make
> Our noisy years seem moments in the being
> Of the eternal silence: truths that wake,
> To perish never.

COBDEN[1]

(*The Nation*, January 1919)

MR. HOBSON begins this interesting, illuminating, though of necessity (considering the ravaged times in which we live) most melancholy book, with an image, so pat and yet so fanciful, as at once to set me off thinking, on my own account, almost before I had begun to read. He introduces his subject by saying, "The process of 'settlement' to which the reputation of a great public man is subjected after he has passed away, is almost inevitably attended by 'grave misrepresentations.'" It was this use of the word "settlement" that played the mischief with my fancy. The "settlement" and simile which Mr. Hobson had in mind when he penned his opening sentence was not, of course, the kind of settlement which a man sometimes makes on his marriage, or that other kind that determines in what parish workhouse he is doomed to die, but the sort of settlement which ensues where the soil, which has been made the foundation of a building, gives way and sinks, either under the weight of the super-imposed structure, or on account of some shifting of the sands below.

It is, indeed, a striking simile which works devastation all around. Mr. Cobden's settlement

[1] *Richard Cobden, the International Man.* By J. A. Hobson (Fisher Unwin).

is not so obvious as that which has befallen many of his distinguished contemporaries in politics, literature, philosophy, and art. "Creeds change, rites pass. No altar standeth whole." It is not only death that makes the difference, though death does make a mighty difference, altering, almost at once, the "point of view." No! it is the passage of time and the course of events which, day by day, with the moving hand of the dial, and the things that happen, reduce dead men's reputations by antiquating the arguments they were never weary of employing, by falsifying their most confident predictions, and, most of all, perhaps, by opening up new markets, not only for goods and manufactures, but for thought and speculation, and thus diverting the old routes along which these dead men were not only content but compelled to travel.

Settlement or no settlement, Cobden has proved himself in these mutable days to be "a good stayer." He was born one hundred and fourteen years ago. He died in 1865. Lord Morley has written (in 1881) his life in two volumes, and now in 1919 appears a book all about him, tingling with interest and vitality. This is a long spell for a "public man." What in the meantime has become of his ancient enemy, Lord Palmerston, who in 1857, when flushed with the glories of the Chinese War and the Crimean War, not only flouted "Cobden, Bright and Co." at the polls, but, so it was confidently predicted, had driven those pests out of public life? In the following year, however, "Cobden, Bright and Co." reappeared in Parliament, and, in Cobden's case,

unopposed. We are all much too apt to mistake incidents for events.

This "study" of Mr. Hobson's is wholly concerned, as its sub-title indicates, with Cobden's Foreign Policy (best described as "anti-Palmerston") with his far-reaching conceptions of international relationships, with his hatred of Foreign Office traditions, with his doctrine of "non-intervention," and with his projects for avoiding war altogether or rendering it as difficult as possible.

Of the triumphant Cobden, the Free Trader, and successful Anti-Corn-Law agitator, we hear not a word, except an occasional complaint from Cobden himself that the agitation succeeded so well as to have exhausted all the courage and initiative of Manchester. I infer from Mr. Hobson's silence on the subject of Free Trade that he is of opinion that, though Tariff Reform is installed in Downing Street, yet as ministers are pledged to leave food and the raw materials of British industries untaxed, a Tariff Reform like that is as little likely to threaten the health of our economics as can a married clergy ever really endanger our Protestant Establishment. Otherwise, I do not think Mr. Hobson could have been induced, notwithstanding his sub-title, to have held his peace throughout four hundred pages.

Cobden expounded his Foreign Policy again and again during the thirties, the forties, and the fifties in pamphlets, which had a wide circulation, and produced at the time a profound educational effect, not only on the minds of the middle classes and the reading artisan, but also

on those of their children, who, though they may not have read these pamphlets for themselves, had to listen to their substance related to them by parental lips at the family board. Cobden was not only one of the most persuasive speakers to a town-bred audience that ever lived, but he was also a most persuasive writer, and his readers were numerous and receptive. Like somebody's whisky, he had a "gran' grip o' the watter" —*e.g.*, I derive my detestation of Palmerston and of all the ways of that double-dealing man from Cobden's pamphlets, though they only reached me at second-hand.

Cobden's methods were thus more instructive than Bright's, and ever in the later days of his "Anti-Palmerston" campaign he had a striking success as a teacher. His "class" may not have been composed of such "influential" persons as Delane's in the *Times*, whose readers then included everybody in receipt of the taxpayer's money, nor could Cobden appear every morning on the breakfast table; but for all that he was a formidable rival even to the *Times*, and as Time and Reason have, oftener than not, shown themselves, to have been on his side, Cobden has struggled out of the fray, leaving less of his wool on the hedges than any other English politician, editor, or publicist of his day and generation.

Teachers of their fellow men can never expect to be popular anywhere, and least of all in England, where to be didactic is to be damned, but as good teachers seldom aim at popularity they need not grumble if they miss it.

Cobden was too bent on immediate persuasion

ever to be offensively didactic. Yet in his hearty and noble detestation of Palmerston's wars and ways he incurred great unpopularity by using language about England that went far to support the allegation, in itself untrue, that he was one of those men who, in Chatham's language, had devoured the strange herb which makes men forget their native country. For example, he writes:

"We shall do no good until we can bring home to the conviction and consciences of men the fact that, as in the slave trade, we had surpassed in guilt the whole world, so in foreign wars we have been the most aggressive, quarrelsome, warlike and bloody nation under the sun" (p. 90). Again: "I wish we had a map, with a red spot printed upon those places by land and sea where we have fought battles since 1688. It would be seen at a glance that we have (unlike any other nation under the sun), been fighting foreign enemies upon every part of the earth's surface, excepting our own territory—thus showing that we have been the most warlike and aggressive people that ever existed" (p. 89).

This is a jaundiced view to take of our old friend the "Weary Titan," groaning along under the too vast orb of his fate. No one can accuse England of treating war as her main industry, and as for being more bloody, more aggressive, and more quarrelsome than any other nation, that hardly seems likely. But, as Cobden candidly admitted, Palmerston had spoiled his temper—so irritated him as almost to force him into taking up an attitude towards war which his general doctrine of non-intervention in no way demanded. Cobden, though no doubt he hated war, as usually waged, more than do most Christians, was no Quaker. What do we find him writing to his Northern friend, Charles Sumner, during the American Civil War? "It is nothing but your great *power* that has kept

the hands of Europe off you." A saying only too true, as we all know to our shame, but how much is involved in its truth!

Cobden sought peace, as President Wilson is doing, through a League of Nations. Before our Russian War began he wrote: "I should appeal not only to Germany, but to all the States, small as well as great, on the Continent, for such a union as would prevent the possibility of any act of hostility from a common enemy."

So long ago as 1849 (before President Wilson was born), Cobden attended a Peace Congress in Paris, which set itself seriously to consider how best to promote the cause of Universal Peace. France, Germany, Belgium, England, and the United States were represented by men at least as eminent as any of those who are to-day making it impossible to get a bed in Paris. Victor Hugo, France incarnate, the mighty lord "of human tears," was its President. M. de Girardin, the most famous editor in Europe, Lamartine, who was once, at all events, a name to conjure with, Chevalier, Say, and Bastiat, political economists of renown, and many others, unanimously recommended the friends of peace to prepare public opinion in their respective countries for the formation of a Congress of Nations, to revise the existing International Law, and to constitute a High Tribunal for the decision of controversies among nations. In support of their objects the Congress, acting, I am sure, in all good faith and sincerity, called to their aid "the representatives of the Press, so potent to diffuse truth, and also all ministers of religion, whose holy office it is to encourage

goodwill among men." This in August, 1849! What mockery it now sounds! The *coup d'état*, the Italian War; the Chinese War; the Crimean War; the Battle of Sadowa; the Franco-German War, bringing in its train the horrors of the Commune; the Boer War; the last War, and the present state of Europe! We have, indeed, supped full of horrors since 1849, despite all the efforts of a truth-diffusing Press, and the pulpit-eloquence of the ordained preachers of good-will among men.

None the less, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," and it is possible to meet in that same Paris to-day and discuss a League of Nations without even an augural grin appearing upon our speaking countenances. Cobden was on the right lines all his life.

It is perhaps worth remarking that of the three heroes of orthodox evangelical Nonconformity in those days, Cobden, Bright, and (a little later) Gladstone, not one of them had any sympathy with the distinctive opinions of their adorers.

Cobden, like many men of his order of mind, was a solitary thinker, but little affected by the contagion of the crowd, even when the crowd was composed of those who were disposed to agree with him. As with Charles Lamb's "true Caledonian" you could not "cry halves" to anything Cobden found. "He does not find but brings and unloads his stock of ideas in perfect order and completeness."

In a notice of this very book of Mr. Hobson's in the *Times*, I found the reviewer contrasting Cobden's somewhat sluggish adhesion to the cause of the North in the early days of the American

Civil War, with the "illustrious" conduct of Bright, who espoused it without doubt or demur from the very first. "The Course of Events" is, indeed, a great newspaper god, above all other gods, and works marvels on editorial minds, but as I read the *Times* I could not help wondering what would have happened to me, who, as a small boy in Liverpool, was pinched black and blue at school for "sticking up" for Lincoln, had I been able in 1862 to carry my wounds to Printing House Square, and asked for sympathy for my sufferings in that glorious cause. Still, it must be just a little dull to be always not a day but, at least, thirty years after the fair.

Cobden's correspondence with Henry Richard, now for the first time published, is described by Mr. Hobson as a process of "feeding the *Star* (a paper of that name) with material chiefly on foreign and imperial affairs." To keep "feeding" a partisan print with its daily bread is an occupation which cannot long be carried on without moral and intellectual damage, and the publication of the process is to subject Cobden to a very severe test. He stands it better than could most men; although, occasionally, he does drop a hint or two from which even Lord Beaverbrook might condescend to learn, as to the best way of indoctrinating a stupid public with ideas from which had they been less cunningly introduced that same stupid public would instinctively have shrunk.

In conclusion, I suspect there will always be some fine folk whose nerves Cobden will occasionally fret. The idols of the Counting House are less attractive than (to employ Bacon's imagery) those

of the Tribe or of the Theatre; but these critics ought, in justice to Cobden, to remember that even if this "painful warrior famousëd for fight," who, sixty years ago and more, pleaded before Europe the cause of a League of Nations, had some scars hidden beneath his shining armour, he gained those in the days of his strenuous middle age, when he fought and won a glorious and resounding victory over a highly-placed and well-endowed band of greedy monopolists.

DISRAELI *EX RELATIONE* SIR WILLIAM FRASER

1905

THE late Sir William Fraser was not, I have been told, a popular person in that society about which he thought so much, and his book, *Disraeli and His Day*, did not succeed in attracting much of the notice of the general reader, and failed, so I, at least, have been made to understand, to win a verdict of approval from the really well informed.

I consider the book a very good one, in the sense of being valuable. Whatever your mood may be, that of the moralist, cynic, satirist, humorist, whether you love, pity, or despise your fellow-man, here is grist for your mill. It feeds the mind.

Although in form the book is but a stringing together of stories, incidents, and aphorisms, still the whole produces a distinct effect. To state what that effect is would be, I suppose, the higher criticism. It is not altogether disagreeable; it is decidedly amusing; it is clever and somewhat contemptible. Sir William Fraser was a baronet who thought well of his order. He desiderated a tribunal to determine the right to the title, and he opined that the courtesy prefix of "Honourable," which once, it appears, belonged to baronets, should be restored to them. Apart from these opinions, ridiculous and peculiar, Sir William Fraser stands revealed in this volume as cast

in a familiar mould. The words "gentleman," "White's," "Society," often flow from his pen, and we may be sure were engraven on his heart. He had seen a world wrecked. When he was young, so he tells his readers, the world consisted of at least three, and certainly not more than five, hundred persons who were accustomed night after night during the season to make their appearance at a certain number of houses, which are affectionately enumerated. A new face at any one of these gatherings immediately attracted attention, as, indeed, it is easy to believe it would. "Anything for a change," as somebody observes in *Pickwick*.

This is the atmosphere of the book, and Sir William breathes in it very pleasantly. Endowed by Nature with a retentive memory and a literary taste, active if singular, he may be discovered in his own pages moving up and down, in and out of society, supplying and correcting quotations, and gratifying the vanity of distinguished authors by remembering their own writings better than they did themselves. The book makes one clearly comprehend what a monstrous clever fellow the rank and file of the Tory party must have felt Sir William Fraser to be. This, however, is only background. In the front of the picture we have the mysterious outlines, the strange personality, struggling between the bizarre and the romantic, of "the Jew," as big George Bentinck was ever accustomed to denominate his leader. Sir William Fraser's Disraeli is a very different figure from Sir Stafford Northcote's. The myth about the pocket Sophocles is rudely exploded. Sir William is certain that Disraeli could not have construed a

chapter of the Greek Testament. He found such mythology as he required where many an honest fellow has found it before him—in Lemprière's Dictionary. His French accent, as Sir William records it, was most satisfactory, and a conclusive proof of his *bona fides*. Disraeli, it is clear, cared as little for literature as he did for art. He admired Gray, as every man with a sense for epithet must; he studied Junius, whose style, so Sir William Fraser believes, he surpassed in his "Runnymede" letters. Sir William Fraser kindly explains the etymology of this strange word "Runnymede," as he also does that of "Parliament," which he says is "*Parliamo mente*" (Let us speak our minds). Sir William clearly possessed the learning denied to his chief.

Beyond apparently imposing upon Sir Stafford Northcote, Disraeli himself never made any vain pretensions to be devoted to pursuits for which he did not care a rap. He once dreamt of an epic poem, and his early ambition urged him a step or two in that direction, but his critical faculty, which, despite all his monstrosities of taste, was vital, restrained him from making a fool of himself, and he forswore the muse, puffed the prostitute away, and carried his very saleable wares to another market, where his efforts were crowned with prodigious success. Sir William Fraser introduces his great man to us as observing, in reply to a question, that revenge was the passion which gives pleasure the latest. A man, he continued, will enjoy that when even avarice has ceased to please. As a matter of fact, Disraeli himself was neither avaricious nor revengeful, and, as far as one can judge, was never tempted to be either. This is the fatal

defect of almost all Disraeli's aphorisms: they are dead words, whilst the words of a true aphorism have veins filled with the life of their utterer. Nothing of this sort ever escaped the lips of our modern Sphinx. If he had any faiths, any deep convictions, any rooted principles, he held his tongue about them. He was, Sir William tells us, an indolent man. It is doubtful whether he ever did, apart from the preparation and delivery of his speeches, what would be called by a professional man a hard day's work in his life. He had courage, wit, insight, instinct, prevision, and a thorough persuasion that he perfectly understood the materials he had to work upon and the tools within his reach. Perhaps no man ever gauged more accurately or more profoundly despised that "world" Sir William Fraser so pathetically laments. For folly, egotism, vanity, conceit, and stupidity, he had an amazing eye. He could not, owing to his short sight, read men's faces across the floor of the House, but he did not require the aid of any optic nerve to see the petty secrets of their souls. His best sayings have men's weaknesses for their text. Sir William's book gives many excellent examples. One laughs throughout.

Sir William would have us believe that in later life Disraeli clung affectionately to dullness—to gentle dullness. He did not want to be surrounded by wits. He had been one himself in his youth, and he questioned their sincerity. It would almost appear from passages in the book that Disraeli found even Sir William Fraser too pungent for him. Once, we are told, the impenetrable Prime Minister quailed before Sir William's reproachful

oratory. The story is not of a cock and a bull, but of a question put in the House of Commons by Sir William, who was snubbed by the Home Secretary, who was cheered by Disraeli. This was intolerable, and accordingly next day, being, as good luck would have it, a Friday, when, as all men and members know, "it is in the power of any member to bring forward any topic he may choose," Sir William naturally chose the topic nearest to his heart, and "said a few words on my wrongs."

During my performance I watched Disraeli narrowly. I could not see his face, but I noticed that whenever I became in any way disagreeable—in short, whenever my words really bit—they were invariably followed by one movement. Sitting as he always did with his right knee over his left, whenever the words touched him he moved the pendent leg twice or three times, then curved his foot upwards. I could observe no other sign of emotion, but this was distinct. Some years afterwards, on a somewhat more important occasion at the Conference at Berlin, a great German philosopher, Herr ——, went to Berlin on purpose to study Disraeli's character. He said afterwards that he was most struck by the more than Indian stoicism which Disraeli showed. To this there was one exception. "Like all men of his race, he has one sign of emotion which never fails to show itself—the movement of the leg that is crossed over the other, and of the foot!" The person who told me this had never heard me hint, nor had anyone, that I had observed this peculiar symptom on the earlier occasion to which I have referred.

Statesmen of Jewish descent, with a reputation for stoicism to preserve, would do well to learn from this story not to swing their crossed leg when tired. The great want about Mr. Disraeli is something to hang the countless anecdotes about him upon. Most remarkable men have some predominant feature of character round which you can build your general conception of them, or, at all events, there has been some great incident in their lives for ever connected with their names,

and your imagination mixes the man and the event together. Who can think of Peel without remembering the Corn Laws and the reverberating sentence: "I shall leave a name execrated by every monopolist who, for less honourable motives, clamours for Protection because it conduces to his own individual benefit; but it may be that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of good-will in the abode of those whose lot it is to labour and to earn their daily bread with the sweat of their brow, when they shall recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened with a sense of injustice." But round what are our memories of Disraeli to cluster? Sir William Fraser speaks rapturously of his wondrous mind and of his intellect, but where is posterity to look for evidences of either? Certainly not in Sir William's book, which shows us a wearied wit and nothing more. Carlyle once asked, "How long will John Bull permit this absurd monkey"—meaning Mr. Disraeli—"to dance upon his stomach?" The question was coarsely put, but there is nothing in Sir William's book to make one wonder it should have been asked. Mr. Disraeli lived to offer Carlyle the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, and that, in Sir William's opinion, is enough to dispose of Carlyle's vituperation; but, after all, the Grand Cross is no answer to anything except an application for it.

A great many other people are made to cross Sir William Fraser's stage. His comments upon them are lively, independent, and original. He liked Cobden and hated Bright. The reason for

this he makes quite plain. He thinks he detected in Cobden a deprecatory manner—a recognition of the sublime truth that he, Richard Cobden, had not been half so well educated as the mob of Tories he was addressing. Bright, on the other hand, was fat and rude, and thought that most country gentlemen and town-bred wits were either fools or fribbles. This was intolerable. Here was a man who not only could not have belonged to the "world," but honestly did not wish to, and was persuaded—the gross fellow—that he and his world were better in every respect than the exclusive circles which listened to Sir William Fraser's *bons mots* and tags from the poets. Certainly there was nothing deprecatory about John Bright. He could be quite as insolent in his way as any aristocrat in his. He had a habit, we are told, of slowly getting up and walking out of the House in the middle of Mr. Disraeli's speeches, and just when that ingenious orator was leading up to a carefully prepared point, and then immediately returning behind the Speaker's chair. If this is true, it was perhaps rude, but nobody can deny that it is a Tory dodge of indicating disdain. What was really irritating about Mr. Bright was that his disdain was genuine. He did think very little of the Tory party, and he did not care one straw for the opinion of society. He positively would not have cared to have been made a baronet. Sir William Fraser seems to have been really fond of Disraeli, and the very last time he met his great man in the Carlton Club he told him a story too broad to be printed. The great man pronounced it admirable, and passed on his weary way.

GLADSTONE[1]

1903

THE first impulse of every kind-hearted man on completing his reading of Mr. Morley's great book must be to congratulate the biographer on his restoration to freedom. Authorship when the author is an artist is a terrible tyranny, controlling, entrancing, enslaving; no day, scarcely an hour, is free from bondage to the idea of the conception shaping in the author's brain; the very sea and sky and all "the wild benefit of nature" become but similes and illustrations, seeming to exist but to point a paragraph or aid the adornment of a tale. It is indeed a veritable House of Bondage. When the work in hand is biography on a great scale, and Mr. Morley's *Life of Gladstone* is biography on a great scale, the tension is increased by the necessity of spending day after day of the biographer's own life in the effort of re-living day by day the life of another man, of illustrating his actions and of diving or trying to dive into the secret recesses of his breast to discover his motives. In such a case as the one under consideration the work that has been done was work worth doing, but for all that, even the most ordinary biographer has his

[1] *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone.* By John Morley. Three volumes (Macmillan, 1903). From the *Contemporary Review.*

own life to lead, his own place in the sun, his own identity to serve, and that is why it is I obey the impulse just mentioned and humbly proffer to Mr. Morley my sincere congratulations upon completing a task which, as he humorously suggests, there is no reason to believe could have been better performed by Hercules himself.

When in May, 1720, Mr. Pope completed his great translation of the Iliad which, whether it be Homer or not, still holds the field against all comers, the poet Gay, after the delightful and friendly fashion of the time, circulated a copy of verses, twenty-one stanzas of *ottava rima*, obviously, says Mr. Courthope, imitated from the opening of the forty-sixth canto of the *Orlando Furioso*, in which he describes all the author's friends coming in crowds to welcome him back from Troy.

> Hail to the bard whom long as lost we mourned,
> From siege, from battle and from storm returned.

The first of these agreeable stanzas runs as follows:

> Long hast thou, friend, been absent from thy soil,
> Like patient Ithacus at siege of Troy;
> I have been witness of thy six years' toil,
> Thy daily labours and thy night's annoy,
> Lost to thy native land with great turmoil:
> Methinks with thee I've trod Sigæan ground
> And heard the shores of Hellespont resound.

It is a pity we have no Parliamentary bard to welcome Mr. Morley back to his place in the House of Commons in lines as good as Gay's, which still bubble with true feeling after the lapse of well-nigh two centuries.

Mr. Morley's *Life of Gladstone* is a big book as

well as a long one. It is composed on a generous scale. You can live in it comfortably for three weeks, for it is not only full of matter, but of life and literature. It is a roomy book, touching many points and suggesting an infinity of thoughts. There is philosophy in it, and passion, scholarship and party feeling.

In Mr. Morley's literary portraits there is always an effective, heart-stirring background. So it is with the great Italian masters of painting, in whose canvases we not only see the imposing figures in the foreground, but behind them "the cold convent spire" rising amidst the "sapphire mountains and the golden sky." Mr. Morley never forgets to give us a background suggestive of the far distances:

> The world which was ere I was born,
> The world which lasts when I am dead.

All of us can understand, almost to their full, the words with which Mr. Morley opens out his vast undertaking:

> I am well aware that to try to write Mr. Gladstone's life at all—the life of a man who held an imposing place in many high national transactions, whose character and career may be regarded in such various lights, whose interests were so manifold, whose years bridged so long a span of time—is a stroke of temerity. To try to write his life to-day is to push temerity still farther.

To ask the question, How has Mr. Morley done his work, and to provide an answer by warmly praising this bit, and more coldly commending that other:

> This likes me more, and this affects me less;

by gently mixing blame with praise, acidulating

your sweets so as to prove your good faith were easily done; and would leave the reviewer's mind at ease to grapple with the *Life of Giordano Bruno* or whatever else may be the title of the next book on his table.

With the fates of books reviewers have small concern. The greatest biography in our language had a cool reception. One thing is, however, plain enough—Mr. Morley has done his best to make his man live, and move, and re-enact his strenuous being, in these three volumes, and has brought to bear upon his tremendous task not only great and highly cultivated literary gifts, and abundant charm, born of books and meditative reading, but a lofty spirit and a mellow wisdom.

A biographer who knew his great man in the flesh is faced, though he may be unconscious of it, with an initial difficulty. How is he to treat his subject in relation to himself? An early copy of Boswell's great book having found its way, in May, 1791, to Berkeley Square, where Horace Walpole, cleverest of men, sat in the critic's arm-chair, a letter was shortly dispatched to Miss Berry containing the following passage: "Boswell has at last published his long-promised life of Dr. Johnson in two volumes quarto. I will give you an account of it when I have gone through it. I have already perceived that, in writing the history of Hudibras, Ralpho has not forgot himself." Here is the difficulty referred to. The Boswellian method is a great method if the biographer is, and does not mind being, a Boswell, who was a true artist if ever there was one. It is hard to imagine anybody less like Boswell than Mr. Morley,

nor are the few pages in which he Boswellises so far as to report the stray conversation of his hero, the liveliest in his volumes.

In a matter of this kind it is not a question of methods, but of men, and coming fresh from the reading of this book I believe that Boswell was not better fitted by temperament to be the biographer of the great Chieftain of Eighteenth Century Table Talk than is Mr. Morley to be the biographer of the great Chieftain of Nineteenth Century Parliamentary Life.

Mr. Morley has solved the personal difficulty by keeping himself rigorously in the background —an obscure hint at his own existence is the most he allows himself. As a man we do not meet Mr. Morley in the pages of his own book, but as a temper, a spirit, a " wandering voice," he pervades it from first to last. Not a chapter but bears his signature at the close. It is all his. This is of the essence of true authorship, of true biography as distinguished from editorship and the collection and correction of letters. No doubt cases may be imagined, perhaps mentioned, where the personality of the biographer, even though not offensively obtruded, overshadows in interest the life story of the man whose picture is being presented, and where you read the text to illustrate the commentary. Of course that is not the case here, for though " the shaping spirit " of the biographer has cut and carved every line of his biography, though his hand is visible everywhere, yet the effect produced upon the reader is to leave him alone with Mr. Gladstone.

Mr. Morley with commendable frankness refers

to and seems to admit the force of the objection that because he does not himself share what were Mr. Gladstone's religious opinions and ecclesiastical predilections, he was therefore as Mr. Gladstone's biographer and *quoad* his religion at a serious disadvantage. Such an objection is both an aspersion upon human nature and an insult to art. The object of a biographer is to exhibit a character, not to defend a creed. Readers, careful and deeply interested readers to be counted by thousands, will judge for themselves. For my part I do not know where to find a book in general circulation one-half so well calculated to excite proud and joyful emotions in the breasts of good English Churchmen of Mr. Gladstone's own way of thinking than Mr. Morley's Life. It was not for nothing that Mr. Gladstone declared, after first meeting his future biographer, that he could not help liking him. If High Churchmen are not satisfied with Mr. Morley's presentation, they must be, which surely they are not, destitute alike of religious emotion and literary instinct. For the first time since the Revolution which brought Dutch William to our shores, has the biographer of a British Prime Minister had imposed upon him the task of presenting to an indifferent world the spectacle of a great secular statesman, who was also a devotee of the Catholic claims of the Church of England; one who believed that no more glorious Church existed in Christendom, and who regarded its "official ordering" as being "not any less, even if it was not infinitely more important in the highest interests of the nation than the construction of a Cabinet or the appointment of permanent heads

of departments." A novelty indeed to which Mr. Morley has been able to do far more justice than could possibly have been rendered by any ecclesiastic or devout layman of the same school of thought. Mr. Gladstone's Life is a book for the world, not for the seminary, and the faintest trace in its composition of the Diocesan Anglican Training College must have destroyed its Catholicity. The background of the biographer's own grave outlook upon life, his ingrained intimacy with the thoughts and emotions of the wise in all ages, his sympathy with men's sad hearts, and outstretched arms, create an ample ether in which it is possible to read all over again about the Gorham case without forgetting Mr. Gladstone's own precept, with which Mr. Morley closes his last volume, "that life is a great and noble calling, not a mean and grovelling thing."

That this part of Mr. Morley's task was difficult may be admitted. The faintest touch of patronage, of condescension to a weakness would have been as odious as the easy confidence of the Diocesan Training College; but what need is there even to imagine such horrid things, none of which are there?

Turning to the book itself and viewing it as a whole, we find it is a great and exciting drama that Mr. Morley has arranged for the world's delectation. Dramaturgist, rather than biographer, he should be called. Madame de Staël once declared that Napoleon was not a man but a system. Nobody knew what the good woman meant, and remembering Napoleon's hearty human detestation of her, it cannot be doubted that she was talking

nonsense, as indeed oracular persons usually do; but when Mr. Traill, seeking to describe the impression produced upon the mind and the sight by Mr. Gladstone in full Parliamentary action, declared that he was not one man but "a phalanx of assailants," the hyperbole is not too extravagant. It is only saying, what was true enough, that you can people a stage with Gladstones. Mr. Morley more than once speaks of his great subject's "dualism or more than dualism." A hard team to drive through three volumes, covering four-score years.

But difficulty is excitement; and I account this book an exciting one. There is about it "a hurry of the spirit," which carries the reader along and makes him forget, in following the progress of a great career, the unavoidable fact that its main incidents have grown a little stale by frequent narration. The biographer has crushed down the narrator of events. We are thinking of Gladstone all through, and not of Ireland or Bulgaria or the Income Tax. The history we are for the moment interested in is not the history of a country but of a mind and a character. The mind is at the beginning slow moving, almost hide-bound, quick to obey the lash of authority, seemingly proud to wear the harness of old tradition. There was nothing of the rebel about the youthful Gladstone. He believed what he was told, and took his Toryism for granted. Old Sir Timothy Shelley would have been proud indeed to have begotten William Ewart, instead of Percy Bysshe. Slowly, almost provokingly slowly, the mind begins to move in an orbit of its own, under influences hard

to ascertain. When, for example, did the unquestioned Evangelicalism of the Liverpool and Seaforth homes begin to change its hues? From whom did he first learn "Church Principles"? Who lit the fires of his fervent Anglicanism? When did there creep into his mental constitution that conception of liberty as a thing precious beyond price? We can from reading Mr. Morley's Life guess at the answers to some of these questions.

As time goes on, and change either of view or point of view takes place, we see the mind of this remarkable man gaining a momentum, gathering a force—ominous of much—until at last it culminates in the prodigious effort of 1886, when the seeming revolution is complete. The mystery that hangs over the early changes does not attach to those of his middle and later life. We can see these at work for ourselves, and hardly need Mr. Gladstone's own copious annotations upon them. Linked with this restless and ever active mind was a character which probably underwent small change. Men's circumstances change, seldom their characters. Mr. Gladstone's character, no less than his mind, stands revealed in this biography. His severest critic, if a student of human nature at all, must admit that Mr. Gladstone had plenty of character. What were its dominant notes it might be hard to say. The union, the marriage of such a mind as Mr. Gladstone's with such a character as his, could not but produce a fascinating result, and when you add to this the circumstance that the theatre on which he energised was the House of Commons, that politics were his supreme occupation, that he was four times Prime Minister,

it is no wonder that his life written by Mr. Morley should be exciting.

Piquancy is included in the situation by the fact that Mr. Disraeli should have been his great opponent. Two men more out of the common, harder for the plain man to unravel, cannot well be imagined. One is not usually sorry for the British public on whose broad back Prime Ministers and Cabinets impose huge burdens, spending its money and spilling its blood with perfect composure, without loss of self-respect or public esteem, but it ought to be in our hearts to pity it for having so long a time to make up its mind between Gladstone and Disraeli. The one was a marvel and the other a mystery. The heads of both men were charged with ideas wholly alien to the common modes of thought of the British householder, whether he compounded for his rates or paid them himself. Browning in his darkest mood was not more puzzling. At last an understanding of some sort was arrived at in both cases, but it took a long time. What a pity it is we have not a Life of the mystery-man on the same generous scale, composed by an intelligence as searching and in a spirit as sympathetically philosophical as we now have of the marvellous man.[1]

It can safely be said that Mr. Morley has triumphed over what in scholastic language may be called the *accidental* difficulties that beset his path. The religious difficulty, the historical difficulty, the personal difficulty have all been conquered. The book's method, tone, temper, and background are hardly capable of improvement.

[1] There is now a Life of the mystery-man in six volumes.

The *substantial* difficulty, which lies in the path of all biographers, that of making their man comprehensible and permanently interesting, a real figure and not merely the oftest repeated name, whether this also has been overcome is a question the friendliest of reviewers, even were he at the same time the most competent, cannot answer within a fortnight of the date of publication.

In trying to fix the eye exclusively upon the great subject of Mr. Morley's biography as he is presented to the world in its pages, the complexity of Mr. Gladstone's mind, as distinguished from his character, becomes clearly revealed. He was, or at all events he became in course of time, a great Reformer. On how many banners have the words "Gladstone and Reform" been inscribed in golden letters! Yet he had not, save in the region of civil administration and finance—a notable exception, no doubt—the Reformer's temperament. He had the theologian's temperament, not the humanitarian's. The institution of slavery, brought close home to him though it was, never shook his soul as it had done Clarkson's. Yet perhaps if his shrewd father, always alive to dangerous possibilities lurking in his son's nature, had not peremptorily forbidden a visit to Jamacia it may well be that Mr. Gladstone's hidden fires of Liberalism would have burst into flame thirty years earlier than they did. The sights that made "Monk" Lewis liberate his slaves in the West Indies, and wrung the heart of Mrs. Kemble on her husband's Georgian plantation, could hardly have left Mr. Gladstone quite unmoved. Still his coolness on the subject is as noticeable as Cardinal Newman's about temperance.

Nor did the horrors of war, the trenches of Sebastopol, ever cause his blood to forsake his cheeks. Given a good cause, a good argumentative cause, like the maintenance of the public law of Europe, and Mr. Gladstone was always ready to defend the appeal to armed force, and he could see men arrayed for mutual slaughter with a theologian's grim composure.

> However much you may detest war—and you cannot detest it too much—there is no war, except one, the war for liberty, that does not contain in it elements of corruption, as well as of misery, that are deplorable to recollect and to consider; but however deplorable wars may be, they are among the necessities of our condition, and there are times when justice, when faith, when the welfare of mankind require a man not to shrink from the responsibility of undertaking them. And if you undertake war, so also you are often obliged to undertake measures that may lead to war (vol. iii. p. 182).

The truth of these remarks lies in the application of them. Justice, faith, the welfare of mankind are easily invoked by angry men.

Nor did old-world abuses, apart from bad taxes, easily arouse Mr. Gladstone's anger. He had a great slice of the eighteenth century in his large composition. He once told me a horrible story of the scenes that were to be witnessed at the hustings in Scotland in the old times he remembered so well. It was, it seems, the habit of the electors on those occasions to spit at the one or other of the candidates they least affected, with such fervour and persistency that before the proceedings were ended both these unfortunate men were covered with saliva from head to heel. Being then a Scottish member this barbarous narrative nearly turned my stomach, but Mr. Gladstone's eyes

gleamed with Hogarthian merriment as he went on to say that at last barriers were put up before the edge of the hustings, just beyond a nicely calculated "spitting distance." I am not sure he did not regard the erection of these barriers as an unworthy concession; and certainly when I expressed joy at the abolition of the hustings altogether, he vehemently demurred and mourned their disappearance like a lover! The fact is he was naturally against any change. Though he disestablished a Church and threatened the Union, he fought his Cabinet like a Trojan against the removal of the Duke of Wellington's statue from Hyde Park Corner (vol. iii. p. 5). He belonged, as Mr. Morley was not likely to forget to remind us, to the Turgot-like order of mind, and it was "a wildish destiny" that made him, against his wish, though not against his will, the propounder, though certainly not the author, of the Newcastle Programme.

This perpetual contrast—brought out so clearly by his biographer—between Mr. Gladstone's temperament and the work he did with such superlative energy as a Reformer, produces a strange effect upon the mind of the reader. It adds perhaps to the excitement, but it is puzzling, and puzzles often tease.

Among Mr. Gladstone's many shining qualities, flashes of insight into the hidden causes of things cannot be numbered. Bright, Cobden, Disraeli saw things long before he did, sometimes, particularly in Disraeli's case, by a happy, careless, irresponsible intuition, sometimes because their minds were not encumbered with irrelevant matter or

their judgments biassed by irrelevant considerations. There are short cuts to truth, but Mr. Gladstone never took any of them. His mind marched like a great army with a heap of *impedimenta*, but when it came up it was in full fighting order. It is melancholy to discover from this Life how often Mr. Gladstone got his best advice, not from his colleagues in the Cabinet, but from rank outsiders. I must not, however, here raise the question of government by Cabinet, but whenever next that question is raised, this book of Mr. Morley's will lie open before the disputants.

But though Mr. Gladstone may not have had the Reformer's temperament, and may have lacked the illuminative insight of Burke, the natural liberality of mind of Fox, the quick wit of Disraeli, and the cynical but useful determination to strip facts to the bone so characteristic of the late Lord Salisbury, Mr. Morley makes us see that Mr. Gladstone had something not one of the great or remarkable men just named possessed, at all events in any noticeable measure, and that something was a great and soul-animating ideal of a sisterhood of nations all acknowledging the yoke of the same Public Law. Himself a fervent Catholic Christian, his dream was that this Public Law, though not limited by the boundaries of Christendom, should be founded upon and administered in the spirit of true religion. Mr. Morley quotes his exclamation in 1879: "Remember that the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan, among the winter snows, is as inviolable in the eye of Almighty God as can be your own. Remember that He who has united you as human beings in

the same flesh and blood has bound you by the law of mutual love; then that mutual love is not limited by the boundaries of Christian civilisation; but it passes over the whole surface of the earth and embraces the meanest along with the greatest in its unmeasured scope" (vol. ii. p. 595). Never before has England had a Prime Minister who could have used such language as this, expecting it to be believed, and it is quite likely she may never have one again.

On the same page Mr. Morley enumerates the six principles Mr. Gladstone thought to be the right ones for us: "To foster the strength of the Empire by just laws and by economy; to seek to preserve the world's peace; to strive to the uttermost to cultivate and maintain the principle of concert in Europe; to avoid needless and entangling engagements; to inspire our foreign policy with the love of freedom; to acknowledge the equal right of all nations." Not a word about Empire! Indeed Mr. Morley hastens to remind us that Mr. Gladstone held up as fundamentally unsound and practically ruinous the revival of the analogy of Imperial Rome for the guidance of British policy.

The secret of Mr. Gladstone's leadership was his idealism. His finance earned him the respect of all men, his idealism secured him the devotion for a time of a majority.

Creeds pass, rites change, no altar standeth whole.

Mr. Gladstone's idealism, which was founded upon Christianity, has been succeeded by an idealism which is founded on Empire. Whether the idea

of Empire is strong enough to bear the tremendous strain that must fall upon it may be doubted. "Do not attempt by philosophy," wrote Dr. Newman, "what once was done by religion." To convert patriotism on an Imperial scale into a religion is an effort now being made which is not without an idealism of its own, but it too will pass.

It has been too much the fashion of late years to speak disparagingly of Mr. Gladstone's oratory. Mr. Morley's book will, I think, tend to restore it to its true level. Although necessarily sparing of quotation, the biographer has been able to give a sufficient number of extracts from Mr. Gladstone's speeches to make good his title to rank with the greatest of our orators. Truly does Mr. Morley say "political oratory is action, not words —action, character, will, conviction, purpose, personality" (vol. iii. p. 312). These are hard things to transmit from one age to another! Mr. Morley has certainly no disposition to exaggerate the charms of printed speeches, but there is a charm about a really great speech on a great subject not to be found in any other mode of expression, and this charm, fugitive as it usually is, does occasionally cling through the centuries. There are at least a dozen of Mr. Gladstone's speeches which may confidently be expected to defy time. There is a favourite parliamentary phrase often in the mouth of the Leader for the time being of the House when he wishes to be kind or civil, about "raising the tone of our debates." Mr. Gladstone was from the very first a famous hand at this exploit. The number of debates which had their tone raised

by him is beyond enumeration. The best example of all is recorded with pride and spirit by Mr. Morley. The Bradlaugh case exhibits the House of Commons at its very worst and Mr. Gladstone at his best. He glorified the House's shame, and his great speech delivered on the 26th of April, 1883, read as it will be with pride so long as Englishmen honour religion and delight in justice, makes amends for the orgy of impiety, stupidity and party malice which called it forth.

I did not mention "party spirit" as one of Mr. Morley's *accidental* difficulties because I cannot suppose it ever was one. Had Mr. Morley, in composing his third volume, pretended to be impartial in the sense of being indifferent as a good judge is indifferent to the parties who appear before him as litigants, nobody would have believed him. He is an honest chronicler of the Home Rule movement as he witnessed it.

The Home Rule controversy is now history. The Party that it called into being has after a remarkable record split on another and a more important issue. The Land Question has passed through many phases, and we are now pledged to the extradition of the loyal garrison and the creation of a peasant proprietary. That a large measure of Home Rule will follow is as certain as anything can be in a world like this. These commonplace considerations have robbed the controversy for young people of the sound and fury that accompanied its birth and progress.

One fault I will hint to prove my good faith. In a book built for all time it is a mistake not to name names. Mr. Morley shies at a name. There

is an index at the end of the third volume, but you may search it in vain for Richard Pigott, nor is the index-maker to blame, for Mr. Morley, though he tells the tale of the forged letters and the Parnell Commission with infinite spirit, matchless terseness, and the utmost plainness of speech, manages to do so without identifying by name "the broken-down Irish journalist," "the unfortunate sinner," "the abject fellow-creature," who fled from the witness-box to blow out his brains in Madrid. But without the name the tale is incomplete, and thousands will read the story for the first time in Mr. Morley's book.

I will give another and more agreeable instance. It is surely a shame to rob good Mr. Greene, the Tory member—usually silent, and now for ever silenced—for Bury St. Edmunds, of the glory of having told during the Ewelme Rectory Debate one of the wittiest and most apposite stories ever recounted to a delighted House. The story may be read in the second volume (p. 387), but Mr. Greene is shoved away into the perpetual obscurity of "a worthy member." It is one of the charms of the House of Commons that the best things said in it have usually been uttered by its least-known members.

On laying down such a biography as this, a simple, natural question rises to one's lips. We now know a great deal more than we knew before, we have been admitted to the inner if not the innermost sanctuaries of being—what effect has been produced upon our affections? I can only express my own belief that this book will make the memory of Mr. Gladstone dear to generations of students.

Mr. Gladstone was a very vulnerable man. Dr. Johnson, who declared Reynolds to be invulnerable, would have had no difficulty in abusing Mr. Gladstone had he been so minded, and ever enjoyed the opportunity. Mr. Morley candidly admits that his great "biographee" had some irritating ways and often failed to create a satisfactory impression upon plain-sailing men. His broad shoulders were made to bear the brunt of untoward events for which colleagues who have since ridden off to seek their own fortunes in far other fields were more to blame than he. His lofty idealism offended the "man of the world." He was never in harmony "with the ideas and temper of the day, especially as they are represented in London." Although one of the great forces of his age, he was not representative of its spirit. He had therefore many enemies scattered up and down the world. He had injured the Empire, so it was said. He was accused of having given up the Ionian Islands, of forsaking Gordon and leaving Majuba unavenged. He was, it was declared, no friend of the flag, and unable to appreciate the Colonies. His enthusiasms were misplaced and his energies misdirected. A little less Homer and more Kipling, less love of economy and more of Empire, would, in the opinion of many, have been an advantageous exchange. But now the great man has gone and left his country to its fate it will be easier for all to do him justice, and, as I have already said, my belief is that Mr. Morley's pious labour will make many friends for Mr. Gladstone's memory.

It is a noble life that is here recorded, the life of a spirit. Man, as well as God, is a spirit:

> For tho' the Giant Ages heave the hill
> And break the shore and evermore
> Make and break, and work their will;
> Tho' worlds on worlds in myriad myriads roll
> Round us, each with different powers,
> And other forms of life than ours,
> What know we greater than the soul?

PRINTED BY THE TEMPLE PRESS AT LETCHWORTH IN GREAT BRITAIN

C1H2